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# AFTERNOON

By

WAYLAND HOYT, D.D.

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# SATURDAY AFTERNOON;

OR,

# CONVERSATIONS

FOR THE

# CULTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY

WAYLAND HOYT, D. D.,

*Author of "Hints and Helps for the Christian Life," "Present Lessons from Distant Days," "Gleams from Paul's Prison," "Along the Pilgrimage," "The Brook in the Way," "Light on Life's Highway," etc., etc.*

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TO THE

NUMEROUS FRIENDS

WHO FOR SO MANY

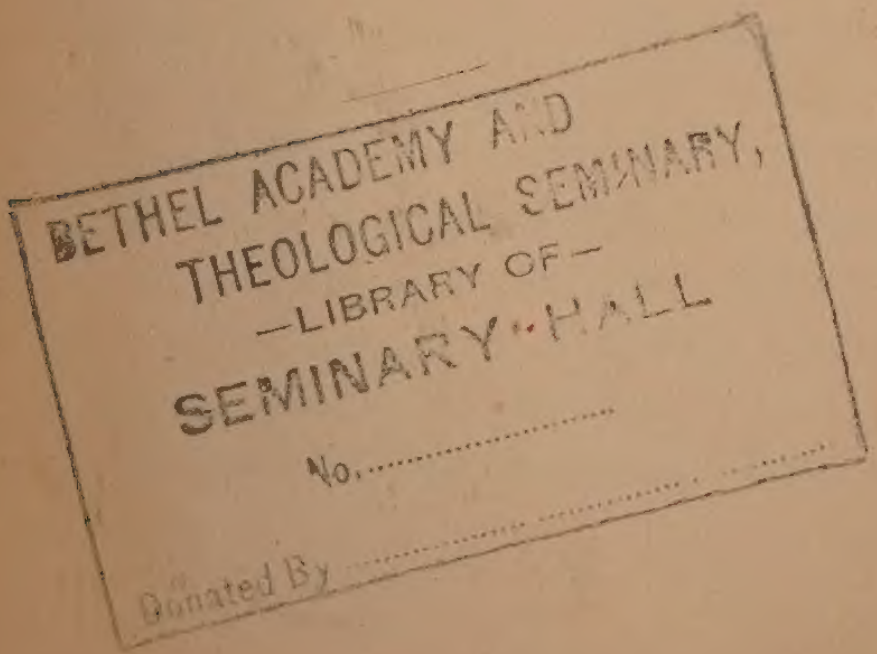
SATURDAY AFTERNOONS

HAVE GATHERED TO LISTEN TO

THESE CONVERSATIONS

THIS SHEAF OF THEM

IS DEDICATED.



# PREFACE.

It fell out in this way: I had been thinking much of the importance of the nurture of the Christian life, and had been wondering how I, as pastor, might specially minister to it. Sunday sermons were too formal, and the usual prayer meetings were too fragmentary. I was longing for some service which should make Christian experience its undivided focus. Announcing such a service, and inviting any to come who cared to, I was immediately surprised to find how wide and deep a need was met. Thus it became a habit of my ministry to devote an hour of the Saturday afternoons of the winter season to such duty. I always called these gatherings "Conversations," that I might indicate their entirely informal character. What I said was extemporaneous, and of the nature of a conversation. My dear friend, the Rev. Dr. H. L. Wayland, the editor of the *National Baptist*, was kind enough to think what I was saying worth reporting for his valuable paper. To him, to Miss Lydia S. Richards, to Miss Burmeister, I am entirely

indebted for the remaining of my word. I have been often asked to throw these Conversations into a volume. By the generous permission of Dr. Wayland I am enabled to do so. Out of many I have selected these. If, in the least, these shall soothe or gird a single Christian heart, I shall be devoutly thankful.

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# SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

## I.

## GRACE AND PEACE.

GRACE and Peace, not one alone, but both, God gives, for in the New Testament they are constantly associated. Paul's salutations are always of this sort, "Grace to you, and peace." I am sure there is a great amount of help to each of us in these two words, and in the joining of them together. Grace is God's attitude toward us, and Peace is the result in us—the way we may feel toward God.

Then let us think just a moment of this word *Grace*, which is expressive of the divine attitude toward us. Etymologically, the word means *blessing-full*. And so it comes to me as a thought of brightness, of gift, and of help, all of which

may be well included in such a beautiful word as Grace.

Doddridge used to write hymns, and append them to his sermons. In that church of his at Northampton, in England, many of our sweetest hymns were born. You will remember that hymn on grace, and I am sure it tells the Scripture truth about it :

Grace, 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear ;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.

Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man ;
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace led my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road ;
And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.

Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days ;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.

For, according to the Scriptures, it was Grace

that bringeth salvation. "Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)," "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." This scheme of salvation sprang not out of man toward God, but out of God toward man. God conceived the way: he gives his Son.

It is superabounding Grace. "Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded grace did much more abound." From Augustine down men have puzzled themselves with the question, "Why did sin enter the world?" But I am sure that out of sin God shall manifest a shining love and glory; for God will overrule it all, and cause his light to stream more radiantly through the darkness.

This grace of God is a source of Strength to us. One said to me last night: "I would be a Christian, if I were sure that I could hold out." I said to him: "If one should come to you, and say, 'I guarantee you an income of twenty thousand dollars a year,' would you ask him if you could be assured of food and clothing and all

necessaries? And don't you believe Christ's grace will supply you with a strength you need? All you need to do is to put your trust in him. 'But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' Are you not sure there is for you in God's grace resource for every necessity, help for every burden? It shall not be provided for you all at once. 'And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.'"

Sometimes you get the grace of Patience; sometimes of Endurance; sometimes of Energy; sometimes of Love; and, finally, grace to die. God gives us "grace *for* grace," which means grace *instead* of grace. You now need grace to perform your present duties well. In sickness you will need the grace of patience and the grace of resignation. As you need, it shall be manifested—"grace *instead* of grace."

This grace is the source of our Hope. "A good hope through grace." Why should not we hope when God is in such grace toward us? His

benediction is upon us. We may say with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd," therefore "I will not fear."

And, then, if because of any perplexity, or because of any tangle of paths into which your feet may be brought, or because of any darkness which overshadows, you should ever be tempted to doubt that this is God's feeling toward you, then always fall back upon that proof of God's love, in giving our Saviour—the death of our Lord upon the cross. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Christ came to live in our nature, to set us an example, and to make expiation for us upon the cross. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Come softly into the house where Death has entered. There has been smitten out of the mother's arms a little child. There it lies in the coffin wrapped about with flowers; flowers so helpless—in no place so helpless as around a coffin. The mother cannot understand such a providence. "Why should *my*

child be taken, my only one? Over the way is a house full of children; why should not one of them be taken, not mine?" As a mother once said, looking sadly at a poor boy hobbling through the street on crutches: "Why should my boy, just his age, so well formed, so perfect, have been taken? If God must take one, why not this deformed one, not mine? How can he be loving and gracious, yet do this thing?"

We can only see a little; God sees much. We can only see an inch; God sees through the eternities. God has translated the child into the celestial gardens "where angels walk and seraphs are the wardens," and in our loneliness we can only be absolutely sure that God's attitude toward us in all this is *grace*.

Go to the cross; see Jesus hanging on it, and remember he was God, my brother, and at the same time my Lord; and in that utmost sacrifice of God there is the proof that God's mood toward us is that of love.

Many and many a time, in my pastoral work, when I have seen one thrust into singular and terrible affliction, I myself have been obliged to

go back to this absolute proof of God's love—Christ's heart broken for us.

And Peace is the result of this attitude of God toward us. Peace is the bloom of grace, because through grace we have the forgiveness of our sins. By the power of the Holy Spirit I see that I am awry with God; I am wrong with him; I am estranged from him. I remember how I cannot go back into the time an hour ago, and change what was in it. Have you ever thought how strangely time comes to us? It flows into the present moment, and we do something, and that something is fixed, and we cannot change it. And so of all the past; and when we think of it, and of ourselves as out of relation with God, and then remember that Christ bore our sins in his own body on a tree, what peace comes into our heart.

Grace is peace in us because it is restoration of Inward Harmony, the restoration of spiritual health. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

When my sin is put away, then I am restored to a right condition with myself. Where was

disharmony now is harmony, and I am once again settled in God, am centred; I am in the right relation, and that relation is inward peace.

This is seen again and again in the household. A child is naughty; she is stubborn. You cannot manifest your love to her. She is out of her true relation with you. Then she repents; she comes to you and makes a confession, and you forgive. The child's relation is restored, and she is at peace.

Because of this grace, there blooms in us the peace of Freedom from Fear. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

This grace also manifests itself in the peace of Ease of Service. It is always the peace within that makes the peace outside. If I am consciously out of harmony with God, and so out of harmony with myself, I cannot well perform the

duties that come to me. I have not, in Miss Waring's beautiful words,

"A heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathize."

If *in* harmony with God and myself, I do not have to think of myself, but am at leisure to think only of my duty.

Also, out of this grace of God blooms for us the peace of Patience in Tribulation. And let us here think what tribulation etymologically means. Picture an Oriental threshing-floor upon which is spread the grain. The *tribulum* is a heavy piece of wood, a kind of slab, the under part of which is set with nails. Oxen drag the tribulum over the floor, breaking away the husks from the imprisoned kernel.

So we may hope that tribulation is breaking away the evil from us, and leaving what is best and highest, and so we can be patient. But let us always bear in mind the distinction between tribulation and punishment. God never punishes Christians. Christians are thrust under the *tribulum*, and, when sure of God's grace, we

may be patient under tribulation, because we know it is *only* tribulation; it is *not* punishment. It is but the breaking away of the chaff from the golden grain.

Then through grace there comes to us the peace of forgiveness, the peace of inward health, the peace of fearlessness, the peace of ease of service, and the peace of patience under tribulation.

But how can we have this peace? Let us think not of ourselves, but of God in Christ. Baxter said when he first became a Christian he gave ten looks at himself and one look at Christ; but after a great deal of darkness and trouble he gave ten at Christ and one at himself.

There was a young man who desired to enlist in one of the militia regiments. His father feared he might be overcome by the temptations; but the son said: "I will promise you that I will absolutely never take a drop of liquor so long as I am a member of the regiment." And the mother said: "If ever, under a stress of temptation, you should be raising a glass to your lips, then look across it and you will see your mother's face." The young man was, near the close of

his service, one day with some companions who were drinking, and who urged him, "because it was the end of their association," to take just this *one* glass. He was just raising it to his lips, when he did, as he really thought, see his mother's face across the glass. Then, dashing it away from him, he said, "I *cannot.*"

Keep your eye on Jesus Christ, and you will get such a vision of God's grace as will bring peace to your heart.

Let us be careful to *obey;* and "whatsoever we eat and whatsoever we drink, let us do all to the glory of God"; "He that doeth his will shall know of the doctrine."

Then, last of all, let us *expect* peace. We have a right to expect it. How much there is in God's grace! It is "exceedingly abundant, above all that we can ask or think." I wish we were all Christians who were determined to get just as much out of religion as we possibly could. There is for all of us God's grace, and so there is for all of us a sweet and shining peace.

## II.

## STRENGTH FOR HARASSED CHRISTIANS.

A PERSON was climbing the Alpine heights, when he saw a flower blooming in a crevice amid drifts of snow. He wondered how the flower could get strength to bloom in such a frozen, barren spot. On examination he found that a tiny white rootlet stretched out to a patch of soil amid the snow drifts, and thence drew nourishment for the plant.

As we confront a new year, and think of the burdens, cares, and shadows that will rest on us, and, still more, of the struggles of the better nature against evil, we ask: "How shall I get through? In the past I have made many mistakes. Can I not do better in the year to come, be more victor, and have more of the shining in my heart?" Where are we going to find strength for this? We need, like the flower,

some peculiar resource. Can we find it? We have about us unfavorable circumstances; there is always a place where the harness rubs. We are in the plight of the little flower; but if we bloom at all, it must be where we are.

As our children grow older, they are more and more a burden to the parents. "What shall I do with him? How shall I lead him?" You have lain awake of nights thinking of all this. The time of constraint has ceased, and there begins the time of sympathy and advice. We wonder how the child we love is going to master this or that temptation.

Then there comes to us a consciousness of loneliness. If we were but helped by those about us, we could get on better. A minister feels as though he had the laboring oar, as though there were a lack of moral and spiritual support. You are often in want of sympathy. There is the chilling influence of a great strain. We have to keep always at the straining point. We feel that we have got to keep this up all through life. It seems as if we had no strength, as if we had exhausted all our ability.

Then there are our easily besetting sins. We keep our temper under for a time; then it gets the better of us. So of our brooding and gloomy thoughts. We dispel them for a time, then they come again and cloud the sky. We wonder how in such circumstances and in such a plight we can expand the beautiful flower of the Christian life.

Now, the Bible is given for just such harassed men and women as we. Turn, for example, to that marvelous Epistle to the Ephesians. If you have not become familiar with it, you can do no better thing for the new year than to read it over and over and over a dozen times. I do not know where there is better help for harassed Christians.

We cannot now understand how hard it was then to be a Christian. There was the luxurious wicked city. There was the beautiful temple with its gorgeous worship. There were a few Christians gathered out of that vice and heathenism, seeking to live purely and nobly, while the whole influence was against them. If we are like that flower amid the snowdrifts, surely *they* were a great deal more so.

And now in the very first chapter, here is what Paul says to these Ephesians: "You are not left alone; you will be helped." And then he says: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the workings of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." It is power like that into which we may thrust ourselves and be strong. It is power, exceeding great "and mighty." We are surrounded by the effects of the divine power. You are out at sea, on board the ship that seems big when in port, but which seems so tiny out on the waves that it is taken as if it were a cockle shell and tossed from wave to wave. You think how terrible if a storm should arise. You feel something of the power of the ocean.

But it is not such an exhibition of power that we are directed to in the passage; it is the great exceeding might which God wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. The most tyrannical power in the world is death. You stand in some companionship which is precious to you; you rejoice in it; but the question arises, How long shall it last? The mother kisses her babe, but she cannot help thinking what if the little child were to lie in her arms chilled to death. At any rate, we press on unceasingly toward death. The last breath will be drawn. I sometimes think how strange it will be to be in a world where the great thought will be Life. Here the reigning thought is death. Life is the word that reigns in the Book of the Revelation. "He showed me a pure river of the water of *life*."

Our Lord came into our world, and took our doom, and himself died. Death wielded its sceptre over him, as it will over you and me; but in Christ this mighty power is baffled. Death is victim, and Christ is victor. He died and then he rose, and that is the sort of power that is on our side, and that is to help us.

This thought is full of stimulus to me. I have one who has helped me, but he drops into the grave and leaves me. I have but his memory. But Christ was raised from the dead. This is resurrection power. It not only raised him, but it set him at God's right hand. In our nature, Christ died; in our nature, was raised; in our nature, he ascended, and sits on the highest throne. There is my nature crowned over all the works of the Creator.

The great power which raised up Christ from the dead and set him at God's right hand has also subjected all to his rule, has "put all things under his feet."

Here is a general passing through a conquered province; he makes requisitions for his army; it may be of cattle, or of grain, or of horses, or of money. It comes, for he has conquered the province, and no one can dispute him.

So our Lord Christ has conquered creation and nature. Providence is at his command. All powers are under his feet; all that is in this world and in the world to come. You do not know that you are helped by angels, but you are.

Every personality and power is facile to his touch.

This power that is so strongly suggested in the passage is power in relation with every one of us; for, "listen, ye trembling Ephesian Christians, this exceeding power is not away off at a distance, but is to us-*ward* who believe." It is this power which we have, power that raised Christ from the dead, and has put him at God's own right hand, and has put all power under his feet.

You may bloom even amid the snowdrifts, for there is power such as we cannot dream of. A Christian woman came to me, and said: "I do not know that I am a Christian; I do not feel as I used." I said to her: "Look here, now, here is the New Testament; read it over and and over, and when you find a passage that speaks of Christ and his power, and what he will do for you, mark it in the margin. Cease looking to yourself and look away to Christ." In a week she came again, and the peace of God was on her face. She had found that Jesus Christ was the reservoir of God's power. Yes, what we have to do is to "lay aside every weight and the

sin that doth so easily beset us," and to look away unto Jesus. Remember what is on our side. One who had taken on her the duty of visitation in this city felt that it was very difficult; but she knelt down, and said: "Lord Jesus, this is all thine. Do thou go with me." She found that the paths that seemed filled with obstacles were cleared of the hindering stones. She looked back, and was surprised to see how easy it all had been. You see, she had drawn on Christ's power.

I remember how sick my heart felt when I came to leave home to go to college, a thousand miles away. I did not know how I should understand the strange studies and the strange surroundings. As I thought of it in the cars, I was appalled. Then I turned to my father, who was sitting by my side, and (without saying a word to him) I just thought, "Well, father is with me, and he will carry me through." It seemed a hard thing to go to college; but what a good thing it was! How could I have done my work but for it! So it will be. Our Lord Christ goes with us to do the difficult things.

Why should we not be strong Christians instead of being weak ones?

Paul Gerhard was a sweet singer, born in Saxony. He is the author of the well-known hymn, "Give to the winds thy fears." The hymn has twelve stanzas in the original, and five of them are in all our hymn books. There is a tender story of how God is true to the faith in him of which the hymn sings. There was a German peasant who lived near Warsaw. His rent was unpaid, and the landlord was about to thrust him from his home. It was in the bitter winter weather, and though the poor man had thrice appealed for a little time to the landlord, the landlord was inexorable. The next day the helpless peasant was to find himself and his family homeless in the snow. What could they do but pray? And then they all sang together the verses of Paul Gerhard's hymn of faith:

"Give to the winds thy fears;
Hope, and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,
God shall lift up thy head."

At length, singing on, they come to the verse:

"Nothing thy work suspending,
No foe can make thee pause,
When thou, thine own defending,
Dost undertake their cause."

There was just then a rap upon the window. This German peasant's grandfather had trained a raven, as such birds can be trained, to do various things. It was this bird tapping against the window pane. The window was opened, and in flew the raven with a costly jeweled ring in his beak. The peasant took it at once to his minister, who identified it as the property of King Stanislaus the Beneficent, and to whom he gave it back. You can easily imagine how, when the king heard the whole story, there was no longer danger of rooflessness to the poor but trustful and honest peasant. Indeed, the king built him a new house, and gave him cattle from his own herds. And over the door of this house, on an iron tablet, stands still the effigy of a raven with a ring in his beak, and underneath are the first four suggestive lines of the beautiful stanza they were singing when help came so surprisingly:

"All means always possessing,
Invincible in might;
Thy doings are all blessing,
Thy goings are all light."

Of course, I do not mean to say that God will help you always in a way so strange; but I do mean to say that God will help. Be sure of this:

'His doings *are* all blessing,
His goings *are* all light. "

Let me read these great verses once again: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

## III.

## AS MUCH AS WE ARE WILLING TO RECEIVE.

YOU remember the story of the staying of the oil. A prophet's widow was in trouble. Her husband's estate had turned out badly, and, after the fashion of the time, the creditors were threatening to sell into bondage her two sons. In her extremity the widow makes application to Elisha. His question is, "What hast thou in the house?" "Only a pot of oil," the distressed widow answers. Then the direction is that she borrow from her neighbors as many vessels as she can. She is to borrow not a few. And when she had gathered the vessels, and behind the shut door of her house began to pour into them from her single pot of oil, she found her supply of oil sufficient to fill all her borrowed vessels. Its sale would lift her beyond want. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to

her son: "Bring me yet a vessel." And he said unto her: "There is not a vessel more." *And the oil stayed.* But the oil did not stay *as long as there were vessels to hold it.*

The ancient story is full of the most real religious uses.

Lay this down as a fundamental principle for the Christian life: *We may have just as much of the grace and help of God as we are willing to receive.* If we are straitened, it is never in God, but always in ourselves. The oil stayed only when there were no more vessels to fill with it.

Here is a most sweet poem of Faith I found to-day:

Since the Father's arm sustains thee,
Peaceful be.
When a chastening hand restrains thee,
It is he.
Know his love in full completeness
Fills the measure of thy weakness;
If he wound thy spirit sore,
Trust him more.

Without measure, uncomplaining,
In his hand
Lay whatever things thou canst not
Understand;

Though the world thy folly spurneth,
From thy faith in pity turneth,
Peace thy inmost soul shall fill,
Lying still.

Like an infant, if thou thinkest
Thou canst stand,
Childlike, proudly pushing back
The proffered hand,
Courage soon is changed to fear,
Strength does feebleness appear;
In his love if thou abide,
He will guide.

Fearest sometimes that thy Father
Hath forgot?
When the clouds around thee gather,
Doubt him not.
Always hath the daylight broken,
Always hath he comfort spoken,
Better hath he been for years
Than thy fears.

Therefore, whatsoe'er betideth
Night or day,
Know—his love for thee provideth
Good alway.
Crown of sorrow gladly take,
Grateful wear it for his sake,
Sweetly bending to his will,
Lying still.

To his own thy Saviour giveth
Daily strength;
To each troubled soul that liveth,
Peace at length;
Weakest lambs have largest share
Of this tender Shepherd's care;
Ask him not then "When?" or "How?
Only bow!

Well, you will say, "That is very beautiful," and I say, "It is beautiful;" and you will say, "It is the mood of faith," and I say, "It is the mood you ought to be in, and which we all may be in, if we will." Whatever may betide externally, there should always be within us a sweet placidity; there should always be such calmness as when Jesus spoke to the waves and said, "Peace, be still." It is not at all impossible that the Christian heart should be in steady daylight, though there be midnight inwardly. *Bring Scripture promises as vessels, into which the grace of faith may be poured.*

For, notice just a moment, What is Faith? Well, it is this: It is something that must always have some object on which it can lay hold. You must have something to believe. There is no

such thing as faith unless you have something toward which faith turns. Two men were talking together; they were transacting a great business enterprise; they were about to part, with certain details that must be done. and one said to the other, "I trust you for all this." This is the way of faith; that man could not have had faith if he had not faith in somebody.

I often say to the deacons in my church: "I will trust you to attend to this," and it is always done. And so you see that faith is not any ecstasy into which we are to urge ourselves. I have said this to you a great many times; but I do not believe you have learned the lesson yet. It is such a pestiferous idea that you cannot have any faith unless you are caught up like Elijah. When people say, "We want more faith," they think, "I have to struggle and to introvert myself and to wonder if this feeling is right and if that feeling is right; and I must spend all night in prayer, and weep, and go through a terrible time to religious ecstacy." That is not faith.

Will you also notice that faith must have not only an object on which to lay hold, but an object

outside of ourselves. You may say to a man, "Have faith in yourself." That is a good thing in certain directions, but not in religion. Samson had faith in himself, and he tumbled fearfully. The prodigal son had faith that he could take care of his own property, and he "wasted it in riotous living." Then what is that on which faith is to lay grasp? It is simply and always the divine promises. We have great faith when we greatly lay hold of what God tells us. Have great experimental knowledge of God's word, and then you will know what God promises to do for you.

I was riding with Mr. Spurgeon one day last summer, and he was telling me how the Lord constantly helped him. And he said: "I don't like to have things go too smoothly; I like to have great burdens laid upon me." "Well," I said, "responsible as you are for one hundred thousand dollars a year, you seem as easy as if it were but a ha'penny." And he said: "I pray about it when any strait closes around me from which I must be delivered." And I said: "*How* do you pray?" And he said: "I get a promise; I find

one which is applicable to my case, and I plead that promise." Faith is not an awful spasm; it is not a tremendous outcry; it is quiet, because it has something on which it lays hold—that is, *on what God has promised.*

And now the reason why we do not have enough of the grace of faith is that we do not bring vessels enough. I say to a person who has become a Christian: "Well, you believe the Lord's promise? Here is this promise, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out'; are you willing to confess Christ?" "Yes; I am willing." "And you do not hold anything back?" "No; I do not." "Well," I say, "here is this promise, 'I will not cast out'; do you believe it?" "Yes; I believe that." So this person brings the vessels of the Lord's promise, and the Lord pours into it the grace of faith, and he believes his sins forgiven.

Many Christians stop right there; they never get beyond the forgiveness of their sins. I know such Christians in this church. If one speaks, he always has a backward look. He says: "Ever so many years ago, I gave myself to Christ, and

he forgave my sins." But he has only meagre faith, though he is a Christian, because he has never brought more than one vessel of promise. It is as if a baby should be born, and stay a baby always, though he should live to be a hundred years old. Lots of Christians whose heads are whitened toward the grave have never gone further than the forgiveness of sins. Just think of the rich promises for us besides that of forgiveness. There is the promise of the divine indwelling: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Suppose I take the vessels of this promise and believe.

Then, also, there are Scripture promises concerning earthly care, a heavenly discipline, and that promise about "all things working together for good to them that love God." That "all things" means trouble with the servants in the kitchen; the dust gathering quickly when you have just swept it away; the beefsteak burned which you were preparing for your husband when he should come home. It means all the criss-cross, and the attrition, and bother; just like a mosquito that does not seriously wound,

but only irritates. Suppose, then, you bring the vessel of that promise, that the Lord may pour in his grace.

Then there are promises concerning great extremity, as, for instance, that promise: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Thy mace and thy crook. One who had just been to Palestine brought back a mace; it was an oak club, into which were driven iron nails. It could deal a very tremendous blow, and was necessary, for the shepherd must be well armed. There is always the vulture hovering over the flock, and there are vipers which must be smitten down. There are banditti prowling around, who get their living by predatory raids on the shepherd.

Then "the rod" is the shepherd's crook. It is that with which he points out the way to the flock as he goes before it, with which he lifts over some gully the lamb too weak to go himself. "Thy defence and thy guidance are with me." That is the meaning of the rod and staff.

Well, you are in extremity; it seems to you as if you were in the valley of the shadow of death. Then, what are you to do? Bring the vessel of a Scripture promise like this. Do not strain and struggle and sweat. Look through this word of God and find a promise which exactly meets your case. If you knew the treasure God had inlaid for you in this word, you would have more faith; for you would know more what you are to believe. Borrow, then, vessels of promise, that the Lord may fill them. Believe for the daily life, and believe for death that is coming to all of us. Borrow vessels of promises, and so into them will flow the grace of faith, and so you will be men and women of great faith.

I was reading, some time since, in one of Dr. William Taylor's books, and there was this foot note: "He was going home from church when he was a boy in Scotland, and he asked his father what the minister meant when he spoke of 'appropriating faith.' His father answered: 'Just take your Bible, and when you come to any promise that just fits you, you just mark that promise; that is appropriating faith.'"

Then, also, let us bring vessels *of service that we may have the grace of strength.* That was a beautiful request that one made the other evening in the prayer meeting: "Pray for me that I may use the light I have." The more she used the light she had, so much the more light she would have. One of the most fundamental passages for the Christian life is: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

I remember how I found that out; I never shall forget it as long as I live. I do not suppose there was ever a fellow who, when he entered the ministry, had greener views than I had. For I said: "I shall do just what I please. I always liked reading and studying; but I do not like this pastoral work, and I am not going to do it." I went on trying to refuse. I said: "I cannot do that," which meant "I will not do it." What a plight I was in! I found there was this one to go and see, and that one to go and see; and I studied the Bible, and found it was full of pastoral work. I never shall forget the night I broke down. I fell on my knees, and said: "Lord, I will do it." And the next

day I started out, and before night I was fond of it, and I have been fond of it ever since.

Now, suppose I had not brought that vessel of service, should I ever have had my strength for service? Just in proportion as you bring vessels of service, you will have God's help; you will not have his help beforehand. Ever so many people say: "We would do this thing if we were sure there was a magazine from which our vessels might be filled." But you will never have the grace of help unless you do what God wants. When you sing—

"The mistakes of my life have been many,"

you say: "Well, I am a very poor Christian, indeed." Well, so are we all; but you need not be so poor as you are. The busiest man is the happiest man—he upon whom time does not hang heavily. Try it; you bring the vessel of service, and into it will shortly be poured the grace of help.

Another point: Bring *the vessel of confession that we may have the grace of shining.* If you look through the Scriptures you will find

ever so many promises of inward light attached to our confessing Christ. Do you remember Ben-hadad besieged the capital of Samaria so closely that there was a terrible famine there, so that the mothers began to eat their children? And the Lord sent such a panic among the hosts of the Syrians that they arose and fled. And the lepers, who had been in trouble, saying: "If we go into the city, we shall die; and if we go to the host of the Syrians, we cannot more than die, anyway," now began to eat; and when they saw the great affluence everywhere, they said: "This is not good; if we tarry until the morning, some mischief will come upon us; now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household." Well, when a Christian has accepted Jesus Christ, and when he has seen the benefit of religion for his own soul, and yet shuts his mouth, as those lepers did, you may be sure he is blighted. I have seen many Christians who do not enjoy religion, having only just enough religion to make them wretched, and that is all. But bring the vessel of confession, and into it shall always be poured the grace of

shining. Only this week I have seen this exemplified. I went to one, and said: "You believe in Christ absolutely?" "Yes." "Well, then, will you confess it by just walking to the seat in front there?" "No; I cannot do that." A few days later I went to her, and said: "Don't you see that you are holding back something from the Lord when you refuse to confess him?" And she thought a moment, and said: "I will confess." Before the meeting closed I saw the shining in her face. You see we have just as much of God's grace and help as we are willing to take. May God grant that we bring vessels that we may have great measure of the oil of grace!

A poor, blind man was traveling one day;
The guiding staff from out his hand was gone,
And the road crooked, so he lost his way;
And the night fell, and a great storm came on.

He was not, therefore, troubled and afraid,
Nor did he vex the silence with his cries;
But on the rainy grass his cheek he laid,
And waited for the morning sun to rise;

Saying to his heart: "Be still, my heart, and wait,
For if a good man happen to go by,

He will not leave us to our dark estate
And the cold cover of the storm, to die.

"But he will sweetly take us by the hand
And lead us back into the straight highway;
Full soon the clouds will have vanished, and
All the wide east be blazoned with the day."

And we are like that blind man, all of us,
Benighted, lost; but while the storm doth fall
Shall we not stay our sinking hearts up thus?
Above us there is One who sees it all.

And if his name be Love, as we are told,
He will not leave us to unequal strife;
But to that city with the streets of gold
Bring us, and give us everlasting life.

Not merely heaven will God give us. He has a great deal for us before we go to heaven. He has strength and shining.

## IV.

## SUBMISSION.

ONE of the best illustrations of submission was given when David, after the death of his child, submitted to God. The child was very sick; David sought earnestly that his life might be spared. Of course, he had used all the skill which the resources of a king could furnish; then he gave himself to prayer and fasting, lying all night upon the ground in supplication. When the child had died, the courtiers, remembering that the king was so smitten at the mere fear of the child's death, dared not tell him. But he asked, "Is the child dead?" and they said, "He is dead." Then he arose and anointed himself and went to the house of God. Then he came to his own house and asked that meat be set before him. They, in great wonder, said: "We cannot understand. You have fasted and have wept when the child

was sick, and now that the child is dead you arise and eat." David said: "While the child was alive I fasted and wept; but now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again?"

I would like to talk to you a little while as we wait together now of what submission is and of what submission will do for us.

Submission is recognition of the divine authority. We are God's really; we are under ownership; we do not belong to ourselves; we belong to God by the right of creation, by the right of redemption, by the right of preservation, by all rights, we are God's property and not our own. There is over us a divine authority. We are under God's scepter. We come distinctly under his rule.

Have you ever asked, "What is the essence of sin?" There is a distinction between the expression of sin, and its root or essence. Sin means essentially, and always is, selfishness or selfness—that is to say, the love of self-rule. It is at the direct antipodes from the divine authority.

When our first parents, in the initial sin, ate the forbidden fruit, they then chose to do without God. This was the seed out of which all sin ever since has sprung. When we become Christians, we recognize God's authority; we declare that we belong to him, and are under his rule.

The divine authority asserts itself in many ways. One way is in that which is inevitable in our lives. There are certain inevitables in every life, and when these occur we may be sure that they are the expression of the divine authority in our lives.

I remember how, in the Vale of Chamouni, I used to look at Mount Blanc, crown of the Alps, rearing itself far up into the blue. I saw that the other mountains scattered about this central one adjusted themselves to it; it adjusted itself to nothing. In every life there are things that stand out as inflexible and rocky as Mount Blanc. We cannot help them; they *are*. But there are many things in our lives which we *can* change. Then we have a perfect right to change them. There is no virtue in penance. It is a Romish notion; and is of the devil, not of the Scripture.

When we can get out of the suffering, we have always a right to do it. The fact of its changeableness is a revelation of the divine will that we may change it. I think many of our troubles are needless troubles. A man said: "I had for five years to plough around a rock in my field, always thinking it such a large rock that it would take too much time and trouble to remove it. Then, accidentally, I found, to my surprise, that it was little more than two feet long." One said: "Then the first time you really faced your difficulty you conquered it." "Yes, and I believe before we pray about them we had better look our troubles right in the face. For five years I had been saying, 'I cannot do it'; yet the minute I faced it over it went."

There are things in our lives that we can change. There are other things that are inevitable; for instance, Byron's club foot; he was born with it; he could not cure it; it was inevitable.

Charles Lamb's sister's insanity was one of the inevitables in his life and her life. In all English history, there is nothing more pathetic. I

have visited the spot where he was born and where he lived. His sister was subject to sudden seizures of insanity. He devoted himself through long years, with the utmost tenderness and self-sacrifice, to this sister. She besought him to put her in a straight jacket whenever these attacks should come; she was always forewarned; he took her to the Retreat to remain while the paroxysm lasted. He accepted the inevitable.

So, also, the death of Mrs. Helen Hunt's ("H. H.") child was one of the inevitables. You remember how broken-hearted she was and how bereaved. Her husband, while stationed in the Narrows in New York Harbor, met with an accident, and was brought home dead. She had one boy in her home; her heart was wrapped in him, and his heart wrapped in her. He was perhaps about fourteen years old. He was taken sick, and, knowing that he must die, he demanded of his mother a promise that, in her loneliness and grief, she would not commit suicide. Simply because she had promised him, she did not commit suicide. Her sorrows opened in her a foun-

tain of song which otherwise might never have been opened. The broken-hearted mother said: "God has done it, and since God has done it God has done it wisely."

Then, also, a real submission is not simply a recognition of the divine authority and a trust in the divine wisdom; but it is also a recognition of the fact that God has a concern with *us* in our daily lives. It is a faith in Providence. A friend said to me the other day: "I want to show you something"; and when I looked through the tube of his microscope, I saw the most exquisite thing I ever saw in my life. There were beautiful stars, wonderful coruscations, and all so exquisite as to baffle all description. It was nothing but mud, with the earthy matter cleaned away by some acid, leaving only the silicious particles. I did not wonder that my friend said to me: "Such a sight as this once made one who was an infidel a Christian. 'For,' he said, 'I believe a God who could lavish such care upon such things must be intelligent.'" The Lord cares for you since he cares for the sparrows. The Lord says: "Look at

the lilies exhaling their fragrance." Since God cares for them, he cares for you. We may look further down, and say: "God cares for even these slight shells of animalculæ, and if he cares for them he must care for me."

And now, since there is such a thing as a divine providence, I must believe that God rules absolutely, and the difficulties which beset my life are really God's appointment. What a wonderful sacredness this brings into my life! Even the *little* things in it he appoints. What I must bear, I bear because he sends; and what I do, I do because he appoints. Now, the real submission is a submission that takes in this fact.

I am aware there are hearts that know their own bitterness. Behind what men call prosperity, there are troubles, deep and constant. I know many a roof covers some hidden grief. I was walking once through that most magnificent street in all the world (Euclid Avenue, in Cleveland), and my father said to me: "I have lived here nearly all my life; I know the history of these families, and there is not one that does not have some hidden trouble."

The Christian says: "It is because God's providence has appointed it"; and true submission recognizes his ruling hand.

Now, just for a moment, let us see what submission will do for us: Submission is *Peace*, because it is opposed to discontent. There are innumerable roughnesses in my circumstances that are all the work of God's providence. I say: "Lord, I do not fly against these things, as the bird does, beating at the bars of its cage. I submit." Now I am relieved at once from the strain of worry. I am bereaved of discontent, and it is a blessed bereavement.

There is nothing more common to do, and more useless to do, than for a person to look over his circumstances, and press his hand on this and that thorn until the hand bleeds; and then to look over the circumstances of some one else, and think: "If I were only treated as this one and that one!" and then grow wretched with envy.

It is the worst thing you can do. You cannot lie on another person's pillow any more than you can go out of your own life. Instead of looking

at other people and envying them, look up and say, "Lord, I submit." Then envy goes at once, and peace comes instead.

Submission is always *Power*. What is the reason God does not help us? God will give us just as much of his grace as we are willing to take; the only measure is what you are willing to receive. He will do "exceeding abundantly," if you will let him. If you refuse to submit, you steel your soul against God and his help.

Amid the mountains, where the shadows fall chill and dense, there are places where are sometimes found, even in June, the remnants of the snowdrifts. You refuse to submit, because you will not let the light shine in.

A real submission is always power. How I remember it in my own experience! "Well," I said to myself, "there are some things I *cannot* do"; but I really meant "I *will not* do." I kept on saying "cannot," and meaning "will not," for many a weary day. It did seem to me impossible to bear. I shall never forget when I did absolutely submit. When you refuse to submit, you close yourself against God's help.

You get *Triumph* by submission, because you allow God to do what he means to do for you. Submission is triumph, because when we let God have his way with us, he brings us to the best things.

In the words of Susan Coolidge:

One stitch dropped, as the weaver drove
His nimble shuttle to and fro,
In and out, beneath, above,
Till the pattern seemed to bud and grow,
As if the fairies had helping been;
One small stitch which could scarce be seen,
But the one stitch dropped, pulled the next stitch out
And a weak place grew in the fabric stout;
And the perfect pattern was marred for aye,
By the one small stitch that was dropped that day.

One small life in God's great plan,
How futile it seems as the ages roll,
Do what it may, or strive how it can
To alter the sweep of the infinite whole!
A single stitch in an infinite web,
A drop in the ocean's flow and ebb!
But the pattern is rent where the stitch is lost,
Or marred where the tangled threads have crossed;
And each life that fails of its true intent
Mars the perfect plan that its Master meant.

Dear friends, the best thing that we can do

concerning the inevitables in our life is to make consecration of them to Jesus Christ, and so to let his peace dwell in us.

"To every one on earth
God gives a burden to be carried down
The road that lies between the cross and crown;
No lot is wholly free:
He giveth one to thee.

"Some carry it aloft,
Open and visible to any eyes,
And all may see its form and weight and size;
Some hide it in their breast,
And deem it thus unguessed."

A little fellow was with his father in the carriage. At his request, his father set him down between his knees, and the boy took the reins to drive the horses. Looking back, he saw that his father's hands were also on the reins, and he said, "I thought *I* was driving, but I wasn't, was I?" God's hands are on the reins, and he is turning everything for our best good. God knows better than we know.

One of the sweetest instances of submission was in the case of Mrs. Tate, wife of the late

Archbishop of Canterbury. Five of their little ones lay dying almost in a day. Mrs. Tate, in a prayer of faith and resignation, said: "Thou hast opened unto them the gate of everlasting glory; thou hast sent thy angels to meet them and to carry them into Abram's bosom. There they reign with thy elect angels in all glory and felicity, forever and ever. Amen."

So, in all of our lives, there are certain inevitables. They cannot be otherwise. They are the expressions always of the divine authority. They are the most emphatic expression of God's will.

A real submission is one which recognizes God's authority, which says, "*God* has done it, therefore I accept." Instead of doing as the bird does, tearing itself in its efforts to get out of the cage, let us submit to what is the expression of God's will.

A true submission trusts in the divine wisdom. This is a most wonderful help. For instance, Paul wanted to go to Rome; Rome was the metropolis of the world, and the gospel banner ought to be unfurled there. And God said that

he should go. But it was a strange leading. He probably expected to go as any traveler might go; but God did not lead him so. There was a mob to oppose him in Jerusalem; then the trouble in Cæsarea; lying there in confinement, he did what a Roman citizen *must* do if he wanted justice. He appealed unto Cæsar, and therefore had to go to Rome as a prisoner. But now *we* can see it, I am sure, though Paul could not see it when he was under the process of it—we can see that that was the very best way to preach, being secured safety and leisure (because a prisoner who had appealed to Cæsar might not be touched by any mob), as he could not have been secured had he gone there not as a prisoner. And he had a chance to preach the gospel, because he won the good will of the centurion and was put by him in the care of a soldier, and was not kept in close confinement. We owe a great part of the most precious portions of our New Testament to Paul's imprisonment at Rome. He himself says: "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." God sees with larger and other

eyes than ours. We cannot see a moment through; God sees the ages through. A real submission is a trust in the divine providence and in the divine wisdom, a trust that God has really arranged things for us as is best for us.

"Take thou thy burden, then,
Into thy hands, and lay it at his feet,
And whether it be success or defeat,
Or pain, or sin, or care,
Leave it calmly there.

"It is the lonely load
That crushes out the life and light of heaven;
But, borne with him, the soul restored, forgiven,
Sings out through all the days
Her joy, and God's high praise."

Yes, the way to bear burdens is to submit to burdens. The way to get rid of burdens is to bear burdens.

Now, forget all else that I have said, but remember the last two sentences: "The way to bear burdens is to submit to burdens. The way to get rid of burdens is to bear burdens."

# V.

## DREADING.

JUST for a very little while on this stormy afternoon, let us talk together of the commonest trouble of the Christian life, that which our Lord is so constantly warning us against. It is a kind of foreboding, a sort of dread of what is to come, a borrowing of trouble, a crossing the bridge before we come to it, and seeing the future filled with haunting shapes of fear, a gloomy wondering how we shall get through—in one word, a kind of *dread*. Now, that a Christian should be under such a shadow is neither Scriptural nor necessary. A Christian man should have his heart in the sunlight, even if his outward circumstances should not be shining. Our Lord's outward surroundings grew dimmer continually, until they passed into the utter darkness. As his ministry advanced, the popularity of its beginning was soon eclipsed amid the hatreds

and discussions and turmoils and murderous intents of the people at Jerusalem. We must not forget that while our Lord was always hungry for human companionship, yet he had always an inner resource. He tells how he is left alone, and yet that he is not alone, for the Father is with him. And he is constantly assuring us that this inner resource is as much for the Christian himself as for his Lord. He says: "He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." There should be a sort of independence of outward circumstances, and a clearing of the clouds within, though they be piled around us. It always takes the heart out of one to have dread, and prevents the accomplishment of anything grand. In Deuteronomy, Moses rehearses to the children of Israel all the dealings of the Lord with them, and shows them the injury they had suffered from this dread. He reminds them that they had fainted at the report of the spies, and the picture which they drew of the Anakim, and how a want of heart fell upon the whole encampment. But although Moses warned them not to continue in this state

of unbelief and fear, they continually relapsed, and finally fell back into the wilderness, and never reached the Promised Land.

Well, we are like those Israelites. We see the Anakim, or, at least, we think we see them, and they are very big sometimes, and fearfully strong, and the dread falls upon our hearts, chilling and foreboding. I believe I have touched upon a very common tendency. How shall we overcome it, this standing in the presence of a duty and thinking we cannot take hold of it and master it? One way is by a real, earnest resolution that we will stop dreading. Very often we have to come up to that point where we shall simply resolve that we will not fear again.

We are apt to excuse ourselves from a duty because we do not feel like it. Now, there is nothing that so brings dread to our hearts as the consciousness of undone duty. If I put off my sermon until the last of the week, I soon fall into the dumps; and the gloom, instead of lessening, increases in like proportion with my neglect. I know a good many Christians to whom I think resolutions here would be of immense good.

In the next place, I think we can overcome this tendency, if we will remember that in nine cases out of ten, when we really go forth to the doing of a thing, we find it much less laborious than we thought it would be.

When I was a boy, and went to Brooklyn to preach there, I thought the greatest man then living was Henry Ward Beecher. I never shall forget how much I wanted to meet him, and how yet, because he seemed to me so gigantic in every way, I feared to meet him. I well remember the day that I heard he wanted to see me, and how I went down to his house that spring morning and walked back and forth before that door many times, not daring to ring the bell. I must have waited half an hour before I found courage to go up the steps and ring, and I remember how my heart palpitated as I waited there, and how it palpitated more when the door opened, and I asked in a very feeble sort of voice if Mr. Beecher was in; and how relieved I felt when told he was not in. And yet all that fear and dread was quite needless. I knew, when I afterward did meet him, that I had

nothing to dread. And this is very often so. Here is some duty you think you ought to do to-day, and you take hold of it in a feeble, halting sort of way; but when you have fully grasped it, you find it is nothing at all. And so, I think, it will be about dying. Of course, we dread it; but I think, when we get there, it will be nothing dreadful. Pain is to warn us of some physical obstruction; it will cease when there is no occasion for pain. The nerves give the warning. If you press a knife deep into the muscles there will be no pain, for no nerves are there: they lie near the surface. There is no pain in gangrene, because there is no more use for pain. And I believe the apparent difficulties that sometimes appear in dying when we stand beside our friends are only apparent. When we have passed beyond a certain point, it will not be difficult to die. And then there will be such an adjustment of the spirit to the fact that what seemed to us so dreadful will not be so at all. I do not know how near I came to death, but once I was very sick, and when I felt that I might go I did not dread death; and when I found

the turn was toward life I was sorry. I do not believe we need to dread death; it will be when we come to it like the Anakim, who fled when the Lord pursued them in his strength. And so, in nine cases out of ten, the thing we most dread will not be nearly so bad as we think.

We can get out of this foreboding *by thinking more of God and less of things.* It was Peter's trouble in the storm that distracted his vision from the Lord to the winds and the waves, and then down he went like lead. How emphatically the Scriptures teach that our vision should be fixed on God—on his love, for instance. I can always assure myself of it when I think of the Cross. There was his beloved Son's utmost sacrifice. There he broke his heart for me, and "he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things." Think of God and his knowledge. It is very beautiful to run through in the Scriptures those passages where God speaks of knowing. Take a concordance and run down those lines about his knowledge, and at how many angles you will get a view of it.

And then, if we should think of God *coming to us when we most need his help*, as he did to the disciples in the stormy lake, we should gain courage. They were steadily doing what their Lord told them to do, and making their way toward the Bethesda, where he had bid them go. The wind was right in their faces, and they were making no headway, yet they never attempted to turn back, but were "toiling in rowing." It was in the early evening they entered the boat, and soon the wind came, and through the next hour, and through the next and the next, they toiled alone. We should have said it was of no use, but they did not say so; and at an hour corresponding to about three or four o'clock in the morning, when their energies must have been almost consumed, at that critical time, they saw the form of one approaching. At first, they are frightened, but soon they hear above the tumult of the waves the music of the words, "It is I; be not afraid." And so the Lord just comes at the time when he is most needed, and that is the kind of a Lord we have.

Really, it is possible to have braver hearts

than we have, and then we shall help *other* people. If we will only stop dreading, and will steadily look toward God, we shall do better service for him.

Not a brooklet floweth
  Onward to the sea,
Not a sunbeam gloweth
  On its bosom free,
Not a seed unfoldeth
  To the glorious air,
But our Father holdeth
  It within his care.

Not a floweret fadeth,
  Not a star grows dim,
Not a cloud o'ershadoweth
  But 'tis marked by him.
Dream not that thy gladness
  God doth fail to see;
Think not in thy sadness
  He forgetteth thee.

Not a tie is broken,
  Not a hope laid low,
Not a farewell spoken
  But our God doth know.
Every hair is numbered,
  Every tear is weighed
In the changeless balance
  Wisest love has made.

Power eternal resteth
  In his changeless hand;
Love immortal hasteth
  Swift at his command.
Faith can firmly trust him
  In the darkest hour,
For the key she holdeth
  To his love and power.

## VI.

## GOD'S REMEDY FOR CARE.

PROFESSOR WARE, of Cambridge, was once asked concerning the best way of bringing up children. He answered by this story:

In the old times there were two towns in New England separated by a dense forest. The way through the forest was only opened by a trail. Once the ministers of the towns proposed an exchange of pulpits. One of the ministers started on his journey. Doubtful about the path, he asked an old woman whom he met the best way of getting to his destination. "Well," she said, "you follow this trail on and on and on until you come to the place where the trail forks; then you take the one which looks most like it, and then go ahead." "That," said Professor Ware, "is about all the advice I can give as to bringing up children; when you are

in doubt as to the way, take the trail that looks most like it and go ahead."

That doubtful trail represents our life. We are surrounded with mystery; we cannot see a foot ahead; we are compelled to stand where the ways meet; and we must take the way that looks the better, and go ahead. The doom of life is choice; life is but a vast procession of choices, and each of these leads to some result. We are kings as to choice; but slaves as to the result of the choice. Taking the wrong track, we are shut up as to the result. Surrounded with mystery, under the sense of our finiteness, we must choose the best we can.

And just here, where the ways fork, and where we cannot know precisely which is the better to follow, and yet, where we must choose this or that—just here is the breeding place of care.

Here, at this place where the ways fork, cares breed, for example, about your children. A difficult thing it is to bring up a child! How constantly you are burdened with care! You do the best you can; but how anxious you are lest your judgment has failed! How you watch

beside the child as he sleeps, and wonder if the leading you are giving him is going to issue in the best bloom!

How cares breed at this place for our friends, especially religiously! How anxious you are for your husband, for your wife, for your friend! Have I spoken enough; have I spoken too much? Have I been earnest enough; or have I been too earnest? Have I prayed enough? How many a religious wife I have known burdened with care for her husband, with shapes of fear set all about her.

How care breeds about ourselves! We ask: "Have we decided this or that in the wisest way? If we could only get back to where the decision was forced on us!" But we cannot. I have stood by the great blast furnace, and have seen the molten iron break forth as fluid as water, so that it could be turned and shaped in any way; but in a moment it was fixed. So with our choices: they were for a moment in our power; now they are unchangeable. We cannot go back.

Here care breeds as to our future. Will this

choice which I have made issue in what is best for me and for those whom I love?

Thus we see all about us the shapes of various cares.

When we have these cares upon us, let us remember what Peter says (1 Peter 5 : 7): "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." The word rendered "care" in the first clause means something which divides you, cuts you in twain, distracts you, which cuts your peace and joy in pieces. When I am confronted with cares in the place where the ways meet I become distracted. My life, instead of being strong and triumphant, becomes weak and broken. Sir Isaac Newton, when asked how he had accomplished so much, said that he had no genius; but that he had held his mind to things in attention. So our own Professor Henry, of the Smithsonian Institute, ascribed his success, not to any genius, but to his habit of turning all his guns upon one point in the walls of obstacles before him. But when we are distracted by cares we cannot hold our minds in attention, we cannot turn our guns. We go on this way and

that, until our life, our peace, our joy, are like a fabric that is beaten out and raveled by the winds. If you had a beautiful shawl, and you should hang it where the wind beating it would ravel it all out, it would represent the effect of these cares. It was to this that our Lord referred when he said: "Take no thought for the morrow"—that is, be not raveled to poor and helpless fringe by anxieties about the morrow.

Is there a remedy for this? Can we be rid of these cares? Can we be free and glad, notwithstanding our finiteness?

The remedy is twofold.

1. *The thought of God's care.* "He careth for you." The word which refers to care as toward God is very different from the word meaning care as toward us. The passage might be rendered, "Casting all your distraction on God, because he is concerned for you." He is not distracted and hesitant; he regards you all the time. And the certainty of this care of God is the remedy for your own care.

Since God cares for us, he must *notice us.* We are often told that the Lord "knows us." This

means sympathetic knowledge, sympathetic interest. What a help it is, and what a comfort that God knows!

A little girl, who had perhaps never been across the street alone, was sent on a necessary errand across the way. She stood on the curb-stone, hesitating; then she looked back and saw that her mother was looking at her; at once she said: "Yes, mamma, I'll do it, if you'll keep looking at me all the way." So God is regarding you and me; it is that sort of care that he has for us.

It is the care of *guidance.* Hold the doctrine of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, only with this limitation—the Holy Spirit in his work for us uses only the written word. If you are ever inspired to do aught contrary to the New Testament, that is not from the Holy Spirit. If you are inspired to do what is according to the New Testament, that is from the Holy Spirit. If you have chosen according to the Holy Spirit and the New Testament, even if the way is dark, do not go back. We do not enough trust the Holy Spirit. He is with us, and if we look sincerely to him,

he will guide us. When Paul was led to Philippi, even though his choice brought imprisonment and scourging, he did not go back on his choice. The books of Chronicles are to me the most arid of all the books of the Bible. But there is one verse which I love to read. It is 2 Chron. 16 : 9 : "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." This does not mean that most wretched doctrine of perfectionism; it means those whose heart is turned toward God in pure intent.

This care for you involves the *overruling of your mistakes.* A mistake is an error of judgment; a sin is a conscious violation of God's law. Since God thus regards us, he overrules our mistakes. My boy makes lots of mistakes. I overrule them; so do you for your child. You say: "I will do the best I can for you." "The mistakes of my life have been many." If that were all, I might be discouraged; but God cares for me.

Livingstone began his work among the Bechu-

anas, among whom his father-in-law Moffat had labored. But then he set out to be an explorer, Moffat said that it was a mistake. The Board at home said that it was a mistake. Perhaps he himself may have said at times that it was a mistake. But how magnificently has God overruled it! He pushed into the centre of the Continent, disclosing its secrets. Stanley went in quest of him, and found him, and opened the way to the Congo region. If you are God's child, he will overrule your mistakes.

Since God thus regards us, he will overrule *our sins.* There is in this no license to sin. If we take from this fact a license to sin, we are not God's children. But if we are led into sin unawares, by overmastering temptation, God overrules it. I had lately a letter from a friend who was long in a state of nominal religion. He was led into sin. Now he writes me that he sees, as never before, the power and preciousness of Christ's atonement; and he trusts him as never before. God's care for that young man was overruling his sin so as to force him to a higher life. We must not indeed

continue in sin that grace may abound; but if we are overswept into sin, then God overrules our sins and mistakes.

2. Another remedy is *the personal appropriation of God's care.* "Casting all your care upon him." We are to throw our cares over and to let go of them. You say: "I cannot. I want to; I try, but how can I?" You can do it if you will let your little child teach you. Sometimes my boy comes home, and there has been a snarl, perhaps in the school, perhaps he is snarled up in himself. He tells me about it; I say: "Very well, I will attend to it." He does not think of it any more; he thinks of me, not of the thing that troubled him. Think more of God, and less of the thing that troubles you.

Oh, if you would read the Bible more; if you would search it for some of the promises; if you would say: "I am going to free myself of some of these cares that cut my joy in pieces, by casting them on God." Think of that verse: "All things work together for good to them that love God." Suppose cares come on you. Take the sword of the Spirit; stab the cares with that

text: "All things work together." Do you think that the cares can live? You will have life and joy and peace.

Paul had an awful care, a thorn in the flesh. It cut him to pieces; it interfered with his duties. He prayed over it once, and again and again and again. Then came the word: "My grace is sufficient for thee." The thorn was there, but he kept thinking of Christ and his grace.

Then there was William the Prince of Orange, through whose labors and sufferings our liberties were born. When overwhelmed with cares, he threw all on God, saying: "God will order all that is needed for my salvation."

This care of God does not contemplate our being without discipline. Rather it includes our discipline. I once spent a red-letter afternoon in the studio of Powers, at Florence. I saw the blocks of Carrara marble; I saw the same blocks half sculptured. As the sculptor's chisel cut great scars in the marble, it seemed as if it were conscious, and as if I could hear it speak, and say: "O sculptor! keep on till you set free the being, the angel perhaps, that is confined

in me. Give me this, though I die of the pain."

So you have pain, trouble. Well, it is God's process of discipline through which he is bringing you to your shining.

The cure of our care lies in God's powerful care for us, and in our appropriation of that care. God says to us perpetually: "Child of my love, lean hard; if you love me, lean hard."

## VII.

## THE CURE FOR HEART-SINKING.

IT is of the *best cure for heart-sinking* I would like to think with you for a little now.

Every one of us, now and then at least, whatever may be the natural temperament, has had this experience of heart-sinking. We all know what it means—a kind of failing of strength; a kind of vague, dark feeling of apprehension; a wondering how we are going to get on. Even a person of the most hopeful nature will sometimes pass into the gloom.

There are many causes for heart-sinking. Sometimes *our circumstances* produce it. I suppose nobody was ever placed in circumstances in which he could not suggest some improvement. Ahab had a shining palace in Samaria, with an exquisite prospect on this side and on that, and the palace was very rich in its furnishing. Every one of us would have said that he had all his

heart could wish. But his palace grounds were not just the shape he wanted; they were angular, the lines including them were not of perfect straightness. And this was because Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard close by the palace of Ahab; and whenever the king looked out of his palace window he saw that little spot of ground, and coveted it day by day, until at last he fell into very deep and tremendous sin. I suppose we are all like Ahab. We may not live in palaces, but though probably we all live in comfortable houses, there are yet angularities in our circumstances which make our hearts sink.

*Fears for the future* cause heart-sinking. Edwin, King of Northumbria, away back in the seventh century, called a council to inquire about Christianity. One of this council addressed him thus: "The present life of man on earth, O king, seems to me, in comparison with that time which is unknown to us, like the swift flight of a swallow through the room where you sit at supper in the winter. The swallow flies in at one door, and immediately out at another; and while he is

within he is safe from the wintry storm; but he passes out into the darkness from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space; but of what went before, or what is to follow we are utterly ignorant. If, therefore, this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems wise to consider it." I do not know of any better figure of a human life than the swallow flying into the room and then out of it into the storm and darkness. We come, whence, we cannot tell, and are a little while, and then are gone. And when we think of the vast, uncertain future, often our hearts sink.

There is heart-sinking from the pain within ourselves. I think of Paul's thorn in the flesh. The Bible is a mirror; we may see ourselves in it. Chronic invalids, it seems to me, must find comfort in the thought that the great, overcoming Paul was always in their plight. That thorn troubled him most sadly. He tells us it made his heart sink; it stabbed him. Sometimes people are companions of Paul in such circumstances.

Then the mystery of the divine providence is

a cause for heart-sinking. Sometimes I go into places where there is bereavement, and I hear the perplexed inquiry: "Why has God tried me so? Why should it not have been spared to me—this treasure upon which my heart is set? Why should this child die, when so many other children live, who do not have the propitious place that my child had?" And down goes the heart like lead.

Now the usual method of cure for heart-sinking is no cure at all. I find the Psalms very wonderful as mirrors of human experience. David tried a method which is not a cure. David complained in the thirteenth Psalm, verses 1, 2: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? forever? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" He was trying the wrong method; was taking counsel in his soul, thinking how he could arrange matters; and so long as he did that he had to cry, How long? Our usual method is to look within ourselves and wonder why we are so tried, forgetting that we are ignorant and weak.

It is always useless to be pulling ourselves to pieces. If I wanted to kill a lily, the surest way would be to dig it up and examine its mechanism; but I should never by that means see the bloom that is possible for the lily. And when we pull ourselves to pieces we do not help ourselves.

But there is a better cure and a real one: It is the refusing to look within ourselves, and downward toward ourselves, and the determining to look at the Lord we love; at the Lord in whose grasp we are. If you read on in this thirteenth Psalm you will find that David finally looks this way. He begins to cry Godward: "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death." And when he begins to look to God, this psalm, that was so full of plaint, is turned to praise: "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." And so the true cure for heart-sinking is a look outside of yourselves, onward and upward toward God. Take some description of your Lord, and fasten your vision on that, and let the power and greatness of it

sink into your hearts. Then your heart will begin to rise just as David's did.

There is one description of our Lord that helps me. It is that in Isaiah 9 : 6 : "For unto us a child is born . . . and the government shall be upon his shoulder." When I am down-hearted I am very apt to think of this Scripture, and I find that the more I think of it the brighter and happier I get. In those old times they did not have such convenient locks and keys as we have now; the keys were very cumbrous and heavy, and must be carried on the shoulders of the men to whom the care of the city was committed. And this is the figure, I think, from which this designation of our Lord was derived. The government is on his shoulders; it is all in his hands. And when I think of that I get out of being down-hearted. He carries the keys; the government is on his shoulders. Here is a cure for heart-sinking.

Well, this Scripture goes on with a very wonderful description of Jesus Christ; it tells us he is wonderful, and therefore able to carry the government on his shoulder. He is wonderful

as far as he himself is concerned. People find fault with miracles. The greatest miracle to me is the presence in this world of such a heart as Jesus Christ. Nothing in the world is so controlling as a man's early training; and our Lord came into a training most sectarian. He was a Hebrew, subject to Hebrew culture; he lived at the time when the Hebrew thought had culminated in the greatest bigotry. The Jew would not go through Samaria because those who lived there were not orthodox Jews. It would be entirely impossible for us to conceive the intense, bitter narrowness of these Hebrews, under whose care and tuition Christ's early years were spent. The wonder is that to him all hearts may hasten and find rest. The Lord Jesus Christ makes himself just as much at home with the Esquimaux of the North as he does with you and me, dwelling in the temperate zone; and he is just as exactly in kin with the mystical dreamer of Oriental lands. He is so broad and great that all hearts can turn to him, and all find in him that which can supply their needs. I do not know any wonder so great as Jesus standing

there amid the narrowness of his surroundings, and teaching, amidst them, the brotherhood of man. And, having entered so thoroughly into our experience, tempted like as we are, how utterly one with us did he become! Though he might have summoned legions of angels, though he might have refused to drink the bitter cup, he accepted all, that he might by experience understand our pain and woe. The stones, disintegrated by the forces of nature, are broken into soil, and in the soil the seed is placed. So, out of the broken stone comes the wheat which is made into bread. So, truly, does the Lord "command that the stones be made bread." Yet he did not do this for his own advantage, but fasted forty days and forty nights that he might know of pain and hunger, and sympathize with us in our distress. The death into which he went for our sakes is such as you and I must some time meet. So he comes into closest relationship and sympathy with us—the great, broad-hearted Christ, the sympathizing Christ, touched with the feeling of our infirmities! Thus he can carry on the government in

a loving, wise way. When you look through the long reach of providence, how loving God seems! The other day I was present at the annual New England dinner, and I thought how strange must have seemed God's ways to those Pilgrim Fathers, but how wise to us! Had those people landed where they meant to land, they would not have had such rigor to contend with, but they would not have developed such sturdy characters. We can see the wisdom that gathered those few men about Plymouth Rock to build this mighty nation. As God is full of wisdom toward nations, so he is full of wisdom toward individuals.

We are told also that this One on whose shoulder the government rests is mighty; and so again he is surely able to carry the government. I got a fresh glimpse of the divine might some time ago. I was looking through a telescope of great power. I saw, in the field of this instrument, Jupiter, with those strange markings on his sphere, and those strange moons masquerading round him. It gave a vivid conception of the vast and exact control of God, to behold those

globes, hanging on nothing in the wide spaces, yet poised in balance exquisite, and careering through their appointed orbits. He on whose shoulder the government lies sustains not only Jupiter and his moons, but Saturn, with his rings and moons, and Venus, and all the million brightnesses of the milky way, and holds as well the boundless universe in his firm grasp, and guides it ever onward to the finishing. He is the Mighty One. Surely he can carry me upon his shoulder. Do you remember the hymn we sometimes sing—

"The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises"?

Besides—to go on with this description of him on whose shoulder the government is laid—he is the everlasting Father, or, as it is more truly rendered, the "Father of eternity." He is the Being whence eternity springs, the one who exists. Nothing can in the least damage or hinder that steady Being. Though he took upon himself our humanity, and bore our woes, and submitted to the death which we must die, he

"burst the bonds of death and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Surely the Being steadily existing can take care of the phases and changes of my little life.

And then, not only is he Wonderful and Counsellor and Mighty and Enduring, but his government contemplates the highest ends; he is the Prince of Peace. This is what he rules for, that you and I need not be restless or distraught. He says: "Let not your heart be troubled."

Not only is he all these, but he is the Triumphant One. Of his government there shall be no end. We are on the winning side of things necessarily when we are on the side of Jesus Christ. He grasps the scepter of enduring victory. He cannot know defeat. How blessed the truth, that the government is on such a shoulder!

Well, when my heart sinks, instead of following David's first example, and beginning to take counsel in my soul, I had immensely better follow David's last example and look out of myself and upward to him on whose shoulder is the

government. The thought of him will cure heart-sinking.

For a moment, now, notice where thought of him will cure heart-sinking. It may cure heart-sinking concerning my natural disposition. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Somehow the new must conquer, and a clashing must be between the new and the old, and the "old Adam" seems often to be on top. How easy it is to be uncourteous and harsh and mean! People find a great deal of fault with the doctrine of total depravity; and, when stated in a certain form, as it used to be stated, that everybody is as bad as can be, I do not accept it. When, however, it is stated in this way—when it is said that in every part of our nature sin has damaged us terribly, that is certainly true. We are none of us what we want to be. We all know how strong the struggle often is between the old Adam and the new.

But if, instead of thinking of my damaged nature; if, instead of fastening vision on that,—and that will surely give me heart-sinking,—I remember that the government is on his shoulder,

I shall find the cure for heart-sinking. I have lately seen one who is very sick with a disease from which she will surely die, if not soon cured. She knows it, but is generally cheerful. But one thing somewhat disturbs her. She is not absolutely sure that she can utterly trust her physician; that his method of treatment is certainly the best. Were she precisely and triumphantly sure of that, how speedily would the clouds be swept from her sky!

But we may be absolutely sure of him upon whose shoulder the government is laid. He will bring us forth conquerors at last, because he is the Mighty One, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace.

And so, you see, instead of having heart-sinking about myself, I may be triumphant about myself; for I look out of myself to him upon whose shoulder the government is laid. The surer way to get rid of your bad disposition, the surer way to become courteous, is to come in contact with courteous people. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

But there is so much space between the beginning Christ-likeness and the consummated Christ-likeness that I must be disciplined. Sometimes my heart sinks under it, and then I cry: "Why? Why?" And I get for answer the only thing one can ever get—the echo, Why? Why? And yet I am persuaded that above and beyond it all there is most wise reason.

I saw some beautiful lines lately that I should like to have you hear:

Some time when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars forevermore have set,
The things which our weak judgment here has spurned,
The things o'er which we grieve with lashes wet,
Will flash before us clear in life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue;
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,
And what most seemed reproof was love most true.

And we shall see how, while we frown and sigh,
God's plans go on as best for you and me,
And how he heeded not our feeble cry
Because unto the end his eye could see;
And e'en as prudent parents disallow
Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,
So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now
Life's sweetest things because it seemeth good.

And if, some time, commingled with life's wine,
We find the wormwood, and rebel and shrink,
Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine
Pours out the portion for our lips to drink;
And if some friend we love is lying low,
Where human kisses cannot reach his face,
Oh, do not blame the loving Father s ,
But wear your sorrow with obedient grace.

And you shall shortly know that lengthened breath
Is not the fairest gift God gives his friend;
Sometimes the sable pall of death
Conceals the sweetest boon his love can send.
If we could push ajar the gates of life
And stand within, and all God's workings see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,
And for each mystery could find a key.

But not to-day. Then be content, poor heart;
God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold.
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold;
And when, through patient toil we reach the land
Where tired feet with sandals loosed may rest,
Where we may clearly know and understand,
I think that we will say: "God knoweth best."

Then also, since he is such a one on whose shoulder the government is laid, I may find, by thinking of him, cure for heart-sinking about

dying. When the fear of dying assaults, the best and quickest thing to do is to turn our thoughts toward Jesus Christ, on whose shoulder is the government.

Do you remember John Bunyan's exquisite description of Mr. Fearing? Brave Great-heart is telling about him: "Why, he was always afraid that he should come short of whither he had a desire to go. Everything frightened him that he heard anybody speak of, if it had the least appearance of opposition in it. I heard that he lay roaring at the Slough of Despond for above a month together; nor durst he, for all he saw several go over before him, venture, though they, many of them, offered to lend him their hands. Well, after he had lain at the Slough of Despond a great while, as I have told you, one sunshiny morning, I don't know how, he ventured, and so got over; but when he was over he would scarce believe it. He had, I think, a Slough of Despond in his mind, a slough that he carried everywhere with him, or else he could never have been as he was. But when he was come at the river where was no bridge, there

again he was in a heavy case. Now, now, he said, he should be drowned forever, and so never see that face with comfort that he had come so many miles to behold. And here also I took notice of what was very remarkable: The water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in my life; so he went over at last not much above wet shod."

You see he need not have been so fearful. He should have remembered him upon whom the government is laid. Let us look away from ourselves unto him. George Macdonald sings:

"I think that Death has two sides to it—
One sunny and one dark; as this round earth
Is every day half sunny and half dark.
We on the dark side call the mystery Death;
They, on the other, looking down in light,
Wait the glad birth with other tears than ours."

# VIII.

## THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

I would like to talk to you for a little while this afternoon about a verse which you will find in 2 Cor. 9 : 15 : "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." I wish to talk about what God gives us. Unspeakable means inestimable; it means what we cannot compass even in thought; it means beyond all estimation. There is no gift like the gift of God to us. And the reason we are such poverty-stricken Christians is because we do not realize this gift enough. George Macdonald tells of a castle in which lived an old man and his nephew; they were very poor, though they were the owners of the castle. Yet from time immemorial there had been concealed within its walls jewels, placed there by some remote ancestors, so that in case anything should happen to their descendants they might have something upon which to fall back. Finally,

the knowledge of these treasures came to them, and they found themselves in the enjoyment of vast riches. They had these riches just as really before as now; the only difference was that now they saw them, took them, and used them.

Just so with Christians. We are the heirs of the universe, and yet we often act as if we were paupers. Yet none of us are paupers. Christians are the aristocrats of the universe, if we only knew it.

Surely, the gift beyond all price is our Lord Jesus Christ himself. The pivotal text of Scripture is what Luther called "a little gospel"; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God did not simply give us his power, his love, his care, things which were on the fringe of his being, so to speak; but that which was the central thing in his being. Now, it is possible for us really to possess Jesus Christ—and this is to be a Christian. The trouble is, we are so anxious to get gifts from Christ that we do not enough value himself.

A friend told me an interesting story about how he had been gone a long time from home; and, on his return, his little daughter ran down the stairs to him as quickly as she could, and said: "Well, papa, what have you got for me?" She did not seem to care for him, but only for his gifts, and she was so occupied with them as to forget all about her father. He was really sad about it. The next time he went away he did not bring her any gift. The little girl, as usual, ran to him, and said: "Oh, papa, what have you brought me?" "Lucy, I have brought you myself this time." The little girl understood at once. Tears filled her eyes, and she said: "Well, papa, I am so glad you have come back home; I am so glad to see you!"

So it is with our Lord Jesus Christ. This gift of himself includes everything. God gave his Son for you and me. The wonderful thing about Christianity is that it lifts us into intimacy with the being on the throne. We need no further mediatorial sacrifice to come to him, nor long and difficult service. But he is, if we will have it so, our Friend, our Guest; and it is

possible for us to enter into an intimate, exquisite companionship with him.

Prayer is a request for specific things, or a thanking God for his care and keeping. But there is a higher realm of prayer than these; it is the realm of communion, where we are so given to Christ, and he to us, that we think of him all the time, and talk with him all the time; and when, while in company, we are yet alone with him. It is the ultimate fruit of the Christian life that we so have Christ himself that we are in communion with him.

And in a sense so real that there are no figures which the Holy Spirit can find to fully set forth its reality, Jesus Christ comes and dwells with us and makes our poverty wealth.

God's utmost gift to us is Jesus Christ himself. Do not be satisfied with anything less. Some people have a church, and they think ever so much of the church; and some people are always talking of the sacraments—the Lord's Supper and baptism. Some have a minister, and they lavish everything on the minister. Some have a book and some have a ritual. But do

not you be satisfied with anything else than Jesus Christ. He is better than church and holier than the holiest thing. Let your Christian life be one of reception of Jesus Christ. When I hear so much about the church, I fear these people do not know very much about the Christ. "God gave his only begotten Son"; do not let your affections centre on anything else. Then, of course, you will join the church which you think nearest the truth; but the motive of it and the meaning of it will be Christ. Be you sure that you do not rest satisfied with anything but the reception of God's utmost gift—the Lord himself.

When I talk to you about the spring, or about the summer,—which is the utmost gift of the year,—I have not said all. I can go on to specify the things which belong to the summer—the blue sky, the fleecy whiteness of the clouds, the brooks, the song of the birds, and the perfumed air.

And so, when I have Christ, I have ever so many things. For instance, Christ gives us eternal life. You remember how he says: "I

give unto them eternal life." When you receive Jesus Christ, then with him you have eternal life. Be sure you get the Scriptural idea of what eternal life is.

"There is no death; what seems so is transition."

Death means the passing into the other life. Eternal death means life out of harmony with God. Eternal life is life in sympathy with Christ. The culmination of that life is heaven; but we have the beginning of it here. Notice, it is in the present tense: "I give (not will give) eternal life." If you are a Christian, you are just as certain of heaven this moment as you will be when the palm of victory is in your hands and the robe of righteousness wraps you around. Do not be downhearted; do not be wondering whether you are a Christian or not. But just ask yourself this question: "Do I really accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour? Have I really and absolutely made myself over to him?" Then you have surely eternal life. There is not the most fearful and distraught soul here this afternoon who may not be absolutely sure of

eternal life. You say you feel so and so. Well, suppose you do; you are sick; or, possibly, you are getting old, and the shadows are lengthening. Old people do not feel as well as when they were young. But your feeling does not make any difference; if you really possess Jesus Christ, then what he gives is certainly yours. You need not bother about whether you are going to heaven. Certainly, you are going to heaven. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Do not be troubled about your future, because you have taken him, and all is involved in the great gift. The gates of pearl will "swing inward for you"; the song of Moses and the Lamb will burst even from your lips.

Well, another gift which we have in Jesus Christ is rest. How like a pillow for weary heads this promise has been for men: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Rest! that is Christ's gift. It is possible for a man to be a Christian and yet not possess this inestimable gift. Just as those people who lived in that old castle were rich and did not know it.

How many times I have thought of those words of Goethe:

"Rest is not quitting
The busy career;
Rest is the fitting
The self to one's sphere.

"'Tis the brook's motion,
Clear, without strife,
Fleeting to ocean
After this life.

"'Tis loving and serving
The highest and best;
'Tis onward, unswerving,
And this is true rest."

Rest is getting rid of friction. If it were not for the little passing annoyances, and the little infelicities of daily occurrence, how delightful to work! For then work would have no friction. Jesus Christ means to give us just that rest now, in a measure, at least. I do not know anything that tells it better than these words of Miss Waring:

"A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize."

Think of the words: "A heart at leisure from itself!" That is rest! You cannot get any better idea of rest than that. You need not ask: "What do these people think about me?" or "How do I feel?" "A heart at leisure from itself"—this is what Christ means to give to you and to me. Do not you see what rest it is? The rest of forgiveness, the rest of our intellect (for he answers all questions), and the rest of our affections (for what nobler or sweeter object of love than he?). "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." There is the rest; but you do not get it because you do not take Christ's yoke upon you. The word "yoke" refers to the old Roman custom: a spear placed here, and a spear there and another spear laid across; and the conquered people were made to pass under these spears; and their passing under this yoke meant that the Roman people owned them absolutely. Then, if we take Christ's yoke in that manner, and do not keep back anything, do not you see how sure we are to find rest? The

reason we do not find more of it is because we do not enough submit to him. We say: "There is a yoke—I will go through that; and there is a yoke—I will go through that; but here is something: I wonder if I do not love this better than Christ; I wonder if I cannot keep this and still be a Christian?" And so we are in the clash of reasons and counter reasons, and are not more than three-fourths under the yoke.

Christ says we have in this great gift of God to us the gift of his Holy Spirit. You remember how Christ said to the woman at the well: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." And the woman said: "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." And the Lord said: "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." In the seventh chapter of John we find an explanation of these words of Christ. Let me turn to it and read: "In the last day,

that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Well, now, why do we not have more of the Holy Spirit? God has given him to us if we are Christians. Why is he not in us as a spring of water? Why are we so easily overcome—so weak? A friend told me something that exactly illustrates this subject. He told me of a place from which a large hotel had been moved away, and on which a woman had now a dwelling house and a garden. There was only one trouble with this place: it was far from a spring, and the woman was obliged to go daily some distance for water. But she noticed a peculiar, damp spot in her garden; nothing would grow there. It was an ugly patch, and she did not know what to do with it. She one day determined to investigate it; and she took with her a trowel and began to dig. She soon found some water, and still

more water; and, going on and on, she came to a brickbat, then an old tin can and sticks, and various other trash. She threw out all these things and found, still further down, a beautiful spring of water upwelling. She had it stoned up; and there upon her premises was a beautiful, clear, cool spring. The water had been trying to force itself up, but could not, because it was obstructed.

So we have the Holy Spirit. The water of life is really ours; yet prayerlessness and refusal to read the Bible choked this spring of the Holy Spirit which we really have. We have the gift, but we keep it choked. Let clean water run through, carrying away all that prevents recognition of spiritual things, and we shall have within us a well of water, springing up into eternal life. Is it not true that within us are many brickbats, old tin cans, and sticks that we ought to throw out? What a wonderful gift we have in Christ! I might go on for hours searching these Scriptures for what we have in them.

So, do not let us be paupers. Do not let us act as though we had no jewels, when we know

we have. The people in George Macdonald's story did not know their wealth; but we do.

This gift of God means that we should give something also to him. It is when Paul is urging the people to give that he breaks out: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

"Death worketh,
Let me work too;
Death undoeth,
Let me do.
Busy as death my work I ply,
Till I rest in the rest of eternity.

"Time worketh,
Let me work too;
Time undoeth,
Let me do.
Busy as time my work I ply,
Till I rest in the rest of eternity.

"Sin worketh,
Let me work too;
Sin undoeth,
Let me do.
Busy as sin my work I ply,
Till I rest in the rest of eternity."

And may God bring us all into rest, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## IX.

## GOD MINE.

THERE is nothing more important in the Christian life than to say, as Paul did: "My God." When we have the summer we have many other things—the blue sky, the white encampments of the clouds, the tender look of nature, the songs of the birds, the lustrous atmosphere, the genial summer shower, and a million other things with the summer. And so in the matter of religion, if we can say "My God," for God includes all beneficencies and all blessings. It is one thing to have God in the intellect, to know him and to recognize him as the Great Cause of causes, as the one who maintains the balance of the universe, as the one who guides nations. But not in that way can we say, "My God." We may refer to God as our moral standard, by comparing our lives with the demands of his pure and holy law. But this is not

the best and truest way to possess God, for the result to us is gloom and awe rather than filial fear. When we so consent to God with our heart that we feel him in real personal relation with ourselves, we can then say from our very deepest hearts, "My God." This is the relation in which Paul was constantly standing toward God, and it is noteworthy how constantly this expression appears in his epistles: "I thank my God that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world"; "I thank my God always on your behalf"; "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." Again, in the Epistle to Philemon (which is too little read, a beautiful Christian illustration of courtesy) we find these words: "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers." This personal appropriation was the habitual mood of the apostle, the constant note he was striking through all the changes of his career. When we can, from our hearts, with the sense of ownership, say "My God," then that possession gives us multitudes of other things, for everything is wrapped up for us in God.

If we are able to say, with Paul, "My God," we shall have a thankful feeling. Paul's mood of thankfulness constantly springs out of this appropriation of God; and we shall be thankful in whatever plight we may be. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans from Corinth, where he had a very hard time, being obliged to maintain himself at his trade of tentmaker, and in the face of all sorts of obstacles and difficulties gathering a church.

Nowhere does our religion so often fail as in this matter of thankfulness. I am often surprised to see how, among us, the tone of Christian life is so different from that of the New Testament. It is a rare thing in prayer meeting to hear the expression of thankfulness. I suppose we should be thankful if we were more thinkful; for thankful means thinkful in the old Saxon. If we thought of God as being personal to ourselves, we should be thinkful of God, and therefore thankful to God.

All through the Psalms you find suggestions of it, and learn that it is delightful to God's heart to have his children thank him. And we

can only truly praise him when in our deepest hearts we look up, and say, "My God."

We shall surely have with this appropriation contentment. Contentment is the result of thankfulness, and when thankful we are full of content. Contentment in the Scriptural sense is a great thing. There is a kind of inertness which we sometimes call content—a sort of stupidity and callousness mistaken for contentment. True contentment is not with attainment, but with allotment. Our hearts ought to be in chime with God, that being contented with him, we shall be sedulously trying to do for him all we can. With this appropriation comes "A heart at leisure from itself," and we are not greatly disturbed by the attention to our circumstances. A little fellow was told that he must be deformed for all his life. He said: "Well, it is all right. God has done it. My Father has done it. I love him. He loves me. He does all right."

Contentment is a kind of inner rest. Sometimes I have stood on a bridge. Here is a train coming in; there, another going out; there is a

train shunted off to a side track—it seems all confusion. Yet there is not all confusion. There is a train director and a lever. The director knows where every car is, and where it must be, and he manages all without clash and without chaos. Nothing can so minister to our happiness as to be able to say: "My God, my Guide, my Help, the one who manages for me." Then comes the placidity of contentment; it is always so. And then, though there may be pain, the pang is taken out of the pain. Even with a ripple of sadness, deep in our hearts there is peace.

I cannot feel
That all is well when dark'ning clouds conceal
The shining sun;
But then I know
God lives and loves; and say, since it is so,
Thy will be done.

I cannot speak
In happy tones; the teardrops on my cheek
Show I am sad;
But I can speak
Of grace to suffer; with submission meek,
Until made glad.

I do not see
Why God should e'er permit some things to be,
When he is love;
But I can see,
Tho' often dimly, through the mystery,
His hand above!

I do not know
Where falls the seed that I had tried to sow
With greatest care;
But I shall know
The meaning of each waiting hour below
Sometime, somewhere!

I do not look
Upon the present, nor in nature's book
To read my fate;
But I do look
For promised blessings in God's holy book,
And I can wait.

I may not try
To keep the hot tears back—but hush that sigh,
"It might have been";
And try to still
Each rising murmur, and to God's sweet will
Respond "Amen!"

It is possible that the person who wrote this poem was ruffled only on the outside, but smooth and calm within. There was an inventor once

who was very much disappointed. He had worked for a long time on a model, and was just on the point of getting it patented, when he found that somebody else on the other side of the Rocky Mountains had anticipated him by a few days. He said: "Some day I shall know why I failed"; for he knew that God had something to do with it. After awhile there came from England another and cheaper machine for the same work, and then he saw why he had failed. "For," he said, "if I had taken out a patent I should have lost money." So contentment is a settled conviction that God does best.

From personal appropriation comes courage. And we need a great deal of courage. It is pretty hard to look through all we have to do. I sometimes feel discouraged. I am always most discouraged just before I get up in the morning; but as soon as I am up and get started the feeling goes. I suppose to all of us life sometimes looks too much for us, and we feel, "Oh, that I had the wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!" I think that David was not the only one who said a thing like that.

While the battle of Waterloo was raging, and while the French could not overcome the English, nor the English overcome the French, and when the balance seemed inclining toward victory for the French, and the English cause nearly lost—then a line of dust was seen in the distant horizon; Blücher was coming up; the Prussians and English together overcame the conqueror of the world. So, we need help; courage is almost gone; but when we can say, "My God," we know that if Blücher does not come, something will come, and we can wait, resting on some such promise as this: "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

If we can say, "My God," we shall surely have constancy. Many of us act spasmodically. You cannot keep the teachers of the Sunday-school at it all the time. A class is gathered and becomes interesting; then the teacher leaves, and the class is disintegrated. These spurting Christians are a great trouble to the pastor; but the consciousness of God as ours, as helping and caring for us, can make us constant.

When we thus appropriate God, we shall have

advancing sanctification. We shall be growing better all the time. We get better by personal contact with one purer and better than we. There is one companion who may be always ours, and this is God. He will enter into relations intimate and personal with every one of us; and if we come into such real contact, we are constantly growing better. A young man says: "I will be an artist"; and he goes over to Europe to study, and comes into contact with the pictures of the great masters. He is a little discouraged at first; but, as he holds himself in this contact, and studies these great works, there comes upon him more ability, and his eye gets to be further-seeing and his imagination becomes unclogged, and he can approximate more and more to what they do. "So we, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." Our deepest need is not that we shall think of God as the Great Cause, or as the one who is set before us merely as our standard; but that we shall think of him as a personal Friend, as our Hope and daily Comforter.

Well, how can we say it? You remember

how, when a child at home, you sometimes had the consciousness of the possessions of your father and your mother, and of everything in the house. I remember I used to look around and say: "My book," "my horses," "my peaches"; and clambering about the fences, say: "My fences." Yet they were not mine; they were father's. I would appropriate these things whenever it was all right between father and mother and me, when I was trying to please them; then I owned father and mother, and everything in the house. But don't you remember how it was when conscious of wrong? Then there came a chasm between your parents and yourself; but the moment that was put away and you came into right relations with your parents, then returned the feeling of possession. And when we are trying to please our Heavenly Father; when we try to keep out from between us everything which prevents intimacy, then there comes the consciousness of possession, and we know that we have all his infinite heart can give. So let us put away all that hinders the shining of his smile Then we are thankful,

then we are contented, then we have courage, then we have constancy. Then, beholding his face, we are changed into the same image more and more, and grow steadily in grace. The greatest thing we can ever say is: "My God."

## X.

## WHAT CHRIST IS TO US.

LET us try to-day to think concerning some of the relations in which the Lord Jesus Christ stands to us. It is a fact of our physical life that, while we are mediately dependent upon a great many things, we are immediately dependent upon the sun. Byron's dream was not all a dream, about the darkness wrapping the earth around, and the chill and gloom, because the sun was blotted out of the heavens. All possibility of life and growth hangs directly on the sunbeam. George Stevenson, who invented the first locomotive, was once standing on a terrace, when he saw the smoke and steam of a locomotive at a distance. Turning to a friend, he said: "Do you know what drives that engine?" "Well, I suppose some Newcastle driver." "But what makes the engine go?" The friend confessed himself unable to answer. "Well, then,

I will tell you: it is the sun that drives that engine." The light and heat of the sun laid up in the coal fields millions of years ago, and now by the action of heat disimprisoned in the fire of the engine, makes the heat which makes the steam; and it is the steam which makes the engine go. When we are carried along on the track, that which carries us is nothing but the sunbeam. As we warm ourselves before a coal fire, the heat is only sun heat. Because the heat of the sun millions of years ago found a receptacle among the plants of the carboniferous era, that same heat is now disengaged by bringing heat into contact with the carbon. We are warm because the sun is warm and because the sun was warm. The mill wheel turns by the push of water; yet it is the sun, after all, which turns the wheel, because it is the power of the sun that lifts the water up into the sky which forms clouds and falls in rains, and then, percolating down the hillside, becomes rivulets. And the vital processes of our bodies also depend upon the sun. I suppose our nervous system is a kind of battery, though we do not know much about it. We

only know that there is a strange something which carries our messages from the brain to the finger tips; and this, no doubt, depends upon the sun. It is the sun that stores the germ in the kernel. It is the sun which lifts the plumule upward, and pushes the radicle downward. It is the sun which pumps the sap along all the channels of the trees. If the sun were permanently eclipsed, there were only darkness and death.

And this is the position in which our Lord stands to us. It would be interesting to take note of all the Scriptures in which the Lord is spoken of as a Sun. As we hang for physical life upon the great orb which is in the visible heavens, so we hang for spiritual life on Jesus Christ, who is our spiritual Sun. Keble's hymn is true:

"Sun of my soul, my Saviour dear,
It is not night if thou be near;
Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide thee from thy servant's eyes.

"Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without thee I dare not die."

In the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, thirtieth verse, there is a kind of condensed statement of the relations in which the Lord Jesus Christ stands to us. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." If you think about it carefully, you will see that these are very wide and including relations. It is as if the apostle had said: Well, everything you need you will find in Jesus Christ. "Of God, Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom." Well, it is a wonderful thing to be wise; it is a wonderful thing to have an absolutely unclouded source of wisdom. We cannot, because accustomed to it all our lives, conceive the boon it is to be sure there is some source whence we can get answers to the deepest questions which will arise about life and about death. For instance, very frequently we are much troubled and burdened, and it seems to us as if the path of life turned back upon itself. So many say to me: "I do not see why God should treat me so; there is that other person—he does not seem to be treated so." How

frequently to this question, "Why?" we get for an answer only an echo, and we are in darkness and trouble. Now, here is something that can help us greatly: we may be sure that we are not the sport of fate; we are in the grasp of a wise Providence; and then in the darkness we shall get a gleam of light. We should be absolutely certain that there is around us a guiding and loving and special providence that lays its hand on us as a mother lays her hand upon her child. If Jesus teaches us anything, he surely teaches us this. He points us to the chattering company of sparrows (and they were just as numerous and pestiferous in Palestine as here, and two of them could be bought for a farthing), and he says: "Your Father remembers them; are ye not much better than they?"

Years ago I was moving, and everything was turned up, and all the furniture was in tremendous disorder, and it was all as uncomfortable as possible. Yet my little child was absolutely unconcerned amid all the disorder, because she knew that nothing that could harm her would come out of it all, for she had absolute

trust in her father and mother. Well, we cannot tell why that thing is hedged up, and this thing gets askew, but if we are absolutely sure of a particular providence as special as the love of a parent for her child, we need not be anxious. And you get this assurance from Jesus.

I find within myself instincts for prayer. I am in trouble; my arms are very short, and, stretch them as I may, I cannot begin to reach the extent of the trouble. Then my instinct is to pray. Yet, how can I be sure it is of any use? I want to know absolutely and certainly whether God does hear prayer. If I let Jesus Christ be made unto me wisdom, then I know.

Then, there is this mighty question about the existence of the soul after death. It seems very strange that we know so little about what is beyond this life. Sometimes I find myself trying to add together the items of knowledge concerning that other state, and they are very dim and very small, comparatively. I reason about it; but do I reason from right premises? Are the links unbroken, and do they lead to the right results? If I turn to Jesus Christ as my wisdom,

I know, for he says: "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," and "In my Father's house are many mansions"; and we also read: "If our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And so, if I let Christ be my wisdom, I may be shining with joy; but this life would not be worth the living without the shining of Jesus Christ.

This Scripture says, Jesus Christ is made unto us righteousness. I do not know of a better illustration of this than that wonderful story of the prodigal son. When he came to himself, I have no doubt that his rags looked raggeder, and his filth looked filthier, and his distance from home still more distant. But he made his weary way back, notwithstanding his rags and scabs and filth, wondering whether when he reached his father's house he would be received. "But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." And when he began to falter, "Make me as one of thy hired

servants," the father broke in and said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put on him." This best robe was a shining white garment, which covered the whole person, and when the boy put it on him he was all completely enwrapped, and you could not see the rags nor filth. Undoubtedly, he was pretty bad. Yes, I suppose he was; but, as far as outward relations were concerned, he was in royal plight, and no servant could point the finger and say: "What a sight he is!" So the Lord Jesus Christ treats us. We have all been in the far country, and were pretty well covered with rags and filth; but when he comes to us he throws over us the "robe of righteousness." Jesus Christ "was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin," and, though his nature were free from every tinge of depravity, yet was he made in our nature, and wrought out a righteousness absolutely complete, as to sin on the one hand, and as to expiating the doom attached to it on the other. And when I believe him he wraps me about with the robe of his righteousness, and I am justified; the Lord has nothing to say against me.

But, then, not only is the Lord made unto us wisdom and righteousness, but he is made unto us sanctification. Be sure he does not leave us in filth; he sets to work to cleanse the inner foulness. Sanctification has to do with our internal cleansing. Christ, by the power of the Spirit, puts a new nature into us. He, by the power of the Spirit, fills us with love for himself. He holds us in contact with himself, and we, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." So that by-and-by, by sanctification, we get inwardly adjusted to the law. He is made unto us sanctification.

This Scripture also says that he is made unto us redemption. This is a somewhat singular word. It is as if the apostle had exhausted every other word in his vocabulary, and now therefore uses this general word to include everything.

Well, since he is all this, and he alone is all this, and since we can only receive all from him just as we receive life physically from the sun, we can easily see what ought to be the main pur-

pose of our Christian life, the keeping ourselves always in the light of him.

In our spiritual state, if we let clouds come between ourselves and Jesus Christ, we have a hard time. Prayer-meetings do not give comfort, and your private prayers do not amount to anything. What you have to do then is to sweep away the clouds; for we have volition over these spiritual clouds. Our aim ought to be to keep ourselves in the shining vision of Jesus Christ. And don't you see that if you do that, it is like a sunshiny day in summer, with the blue sky, and the fragrance of flowers? What is the end and aim of the Christian life? Is it to have summer always shining down into your heart? Keep yourself always in this vision of Jesus Christ, and then all questions will get decided as to what you should do.

If all this is true we ought to believe in a wide way and a great way toward Jesus Christ. Some people will believe toward him as to righteousness. They believe he forgives their sins, but they believe nothing else, and they get just as much as they believe and nothing else.

They have the memory of a time when they were converted, and their mind reverts to that; but they should believe toward God as not only wisdom and justification, but they should believe toward him as their sanctification. Just as the earth has a great faith toward the sun, whose beams will start the germs of vegetation, we need a great faith toward Jesus Christ. Well, we shall have it if we know more about Jesus Christ, and we shall know about him if we will read more about him in the New Testament. Lyte, who wrote that sweet hymn:

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,"

wrote also another hymn, less familiar, but of similar import. It is this:

Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest,
Far did I rove, and knew no certain home;
At last I sought them in his sheltering breast,
Who opes his arms and bids the weary come.
With him I found a home, a rest divine;
And since then I am his and he is mine.

Yes, he is mine, and nought of earthly things,
Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
The fame of heroes or the pomp of kings,
Could tempt me to forego his love an hour.

Go, worthless world, I cry, with all that's thine
Go! I my Saviour's am, and he is mine.

The good I have is from his stores supplied,
  The ill is only what he deems the best.
He for my friend, I'm rich with nought beside;
  And poor without him, though of all possessed.
Changes may come—I take, or I resign—
Content while I am his, while he is mine.

Whate'er may change, in him no change is seen,
  A glorious sun, that wanes not, nor declines;
Above the clouds and storms, he walks serene,
  And sweetly on his people's darkness shines.
All may depart—I fret not nor repine,
While I my Saviour's am, while he is mine.

He stays me falling; lifts me up when down;
  Reclaims me wandering, guards from every foe;
Plants on my worthless brow the victor's crown;
  Which, in return, before his feet I throw,
Grieved that I cannot better grace his shrine
Who deigns to own me his, as he is mine.

While here, alas! I know but half his love,
  But half discern him, and but half adore;
But when I meet him in the realms above,
  I hope to love him better, praise him more,
And feel and tell, amid the choir divine,
How fully I am his, and he is mine.

# XI.

## UNION WITH CHRIST.

I WOULD like to talk to you this afternoon on the "Union of the Believer with Christ." If any one will read the New Testament with that thought in mind, he will be surprised to find how full of this subject it is, and much more is revealed concerning it than we can distinctly conceive or clearly express. Yet no truth is more real than this, that if we are one with Christ we have been taken into a most real and indissoluble union with our Lord. As one has put it: "The great fact of objective Christianity is Incarnation for atonement; the great fact of subjective Christianity is union with Christ, whereby we receive the atonement." That is to say, Christianity, looked at outside ourselves, means that the Lord Jesus Christ took upon himself our nature in the Incarnation, in order that through obedience in it, and through expiation in it he

might work out for us complete atonement, by means of which we may be delivered from the remorse of our own conscience on the one hand, and the claims of a violated law on the other. But, looked at from an internal point of view, in the heart, in the life—the great fact around which all crystallizes is this fact of union with Christ; and by this union the external atonement is made real and vital to ourselves. I am very sure this is a truth, that the great fact outwardly is atonement, inwardly is union with Christ.

The great fact begins with our regeneration. The apostle says: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." He does not mean that any new faculties have been added, but he does mean that in regeneration the entire trend of our nature is changed; so that, instead of flowing from God, it begins to flow toward God. There is a new direction of the faculties, and the soul now receives a new illumination of intellect, a new trend, and a new capacity. Then there is implanted in us the principle of the new life; the germ begins; and that new life is the

Lord Jesus Christ, in some real way uniting himself with us.

The union is declared in justification. By justification we are declared innocent. We are as if we had not sinned, since Christ has fulfilled the law for us, and we are so truly one with him that what belongs to him belongs to us.

This union is still further proved by our sanctification. Since he dwells in us, and becomes one with us, we become more like him, and manifest more likeness to him. And the man who is growing more Christlike is the man who is showing forth this union with Christ. It is also proved by our perseverance. When our Lord Jesus grasps us he does not grasp us to let us go; so our perseverance is more his grasp of us than our grasp of him. He maintains the union, and for this reason we shall at last awake satisfied with his likeness. The New Testament is very full on this point. It is singular how affluent the Scriptures are touching this truth, that we are really one with Jesus Christ. The divine omnipresence means that the whole God is everywhere, and at all times at every point of

space; but this idea of the union of the believer with the Lord Jesus is something other than the doctrine of the divine presence.

Then there is the divine sympathy with us, because Jesus "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin"; but this is something more than that. Every one of us is influenced by the Holy Spirit; yet this union of the believer with his Lord is deeper than even that.

Now, then, to come to the Scripture teaching; how full it is, and how various! It is stated largely by figure, as such deep truths can hardly be shown except by figures. It is illustrated by the figure of the building and the foundation. Just as every stone of the building is united to and dependent on every other, and is therefore a part of that on which the building rests, so, in some such way is every one who trusts Christ brought into most intimate relation with him. In Ephesians, we read: "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye

also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

And then frequently, in the Scriptures, this union is illustrated by that closest union which we know anything about, that of the husband and wife. The Church does not mean any particular denomination, but it means all of those who have come into this vital relation with him who is the invisible Head of God's chosen ones. It is often represented as the Bride of Christ. And, just as in marriage, those who are twain become one, and, in a deeper way than we can understand and express, are one, so our Lord Jesus Christ is declared to be one with the Church, which is his Bride. You remember the Oriental symbology employed to describe this union, and the brightness and blessedness reserved for those who are united to him in such intimacy, and into which he will surely lift all who have become a part of his bride.

This union is illustrated in that other figure of the vine and its branches: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Well, there is no union that we can think of closer than that between the branch

and the vine. Through all the channels of the branch pulsates the sap from the vine, and the clusters hang upon the branches because there is this union with the vine. If you are going to try to conceive of deep union, you cannot possibly express it in a stronger figure than this, the branch and the vine. Yet our Lord Jesus Christ teaches just this union: "Without me ye can do nothing. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me."

And then this fact is further set forth in that figure of the union of the head and members of the body. We all know how intimate that union is; nothing can be closer. The head presides over the body; it is the seat of sensations for the body. We cannot come into the consciousness of sensation until it has been registered in the brain. The life of the head is the life of the body. If a limb be severed from its relation with the head, there is no longer life in the limb. So Christ says: "I am the head, and ye are the body." Every believer is in as real

union with the Lord as is your body with your head.

Then there are direct statements of this union. The believer is constantly spoken of as being "in Christ." You would be surprised to notice how often Paul speaks so. He says: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." And, conversely, the Lord is in those who trust him. "I in them, and they in me." "I in you, and ye in me." This means a great deal; it means more than I know. I only know it means this, that in a way deeper and more intimate than any figure can set forth; in a way closer and more real than any direct statement can tell; in this way has every one who believes in Jesus Christ been lifted up into such real union with himself that he becomes one with his Lord. This is a great fact concerning the Christian life, and there are great inferences that follow from it.

Consider the honor of it. We cannot conceive the honor, we cannot imagine the honor; but we shall understand more of it in the shining yonder. We shall then begin to know

how much this intimacy of union means. Is it not a wonderful honor that the poorest and most ignorant, and most troubled and most burdened of us; the one of us whom the world may pass by, slighting the one, perhaps, most unsuccessful, the one whose life seems a failure—has, nevertheless, if he has given himself to Jesus Christ, the honor of being taken into this indissoluble union with the King of the Universe? The branch and the vine! Husband and wife! I am sure we can get from such figures some glimpses here of what must be this union, and to what rank those who trust Jesus Christ are to be lifted. It is not a slight thing to be thus one with him who made all worlds (for "without him was not anything made that was made"), with him who sits upon the throne of the universe, with him who for our sakes became poor.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ has become our brother, there is formed between the believer and his Lord a mystical union. It is a vital union; by which I mean a union of life, so that the believer can say, like the apostle: "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the

Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Not only is it a vital union, but an indissoluble union. There has been formed between him and me a union which nothing can ever end. If I profess to have formed the union without the life that such union involves and should fall, it would not follow that I had fallen from grace, but that I had never been in grace. "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." "Them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

I know of nothing that can make the thought of life more sacred. Here am I, in union with my Lord. He "who was with God and who was God," he condescended to my nature and became one with me—so really that he dwells in me and I in him. There is formed within us a union indissoluble; and what belongs to him

belongs to me; and, on the other hand, what belongs to me belongs to him.

One of the results of this union to the believer is that he is brought under the assimilating and transforming power of Christ's life, and is made purer and still purer. If you want to know beauty, study the highest expressions of beauty; this principle is of wide application. Says the scented clay, when asked: "Why are you so filled with fragrance?" "I have been lying near the rose." We are only clay, yet we may have a divine fragrance because we are in contact with Jesus Christ.

This assimilating power is active also toward the body. At last we shall have a body like unto his glorious body. I only know that the circle of the Lord's power is drawn around our bodies as well as our souls. The past resurrection life of our Lord is especially interesting, because it gives us some faint idea of what that life may be. The life into which I enter will be a life like that, the likeness of Christ's "glorious body."

I met this little leaf out of the daily life lately:

"'The work of our hands establish thou it.' I read the word over again, going back a little, 'And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.' 'The work of my hands day by day,' I said, almost scornfully, as I thought of the homely work my hands had to do—the cooking, the housework, the patching, the mending, the rough, hard work I sometimes had to put them to. And I smiled as I thought of such work being established forever. I smiled again almost bitterly as I thought: 'It is established that my hands must work, if not forever, for all my earthly time.' 'Please comb my hair now, mamma; the first bell is ringing,' and Neddie tapped my hand with his comb. I parted and smoothed my boy's tangled locks. 'The work of my hands,' I said, and perhaps more gently than usual turned up my boy's face to kiss his lips as he went to school.

"I turned to the sitting room, drew up the shades in the bay window so that my few geraniums might have all the sun's ray they could,

shook down the coal in the stove, dusted the chairs, straightened the table cover and books, and brushed the shreds from the carpet; sighing over the thin places that the best arrangement of mats could not cover. The rooms looked neat and tidy. 'The work of my hands,' I repeated, mechanically. Just then the sun shone out bright. It lit up my room like a kind smile. 'The beauty of the Lord our God,' I repeated, softly.

"I went to my homely work in the kitchen. Patiently I tried to go through my every-day routine of duty. For I said to myself: 'If this is always to be the work of my hands, surely I must let the beauty of my Lord rest upon it.'

"'You look very bright to-night, wife,' said Will, when he came in after his day's work. 'Has it been an easy day?'

"I thought of the cooking and ironing, of my tired hands and feet, and smiled as I said: "I had a good text this morning.'"

Do you not see that the beauty of the Lord does rest upon even such humble work? Do you not see that your religion need not be a thing simply for prayer meeting, simply for

Bibles or for closets? Do you not see how, if it is small, his beauty does rest upon such service as that? Do you not know how, when somebody is sick at home, and the sickness is dangerous, so that the patient may be injured by being turned over to any hired nurse, and the husband or the wife, or nearest friend must do the duty, every menial thing about the sick room is then transformed into a holy service. Then you do what otherwise the servants would do; and you do it because of love to the sick one lying there; and this love glorifies the meanest duty. Loving the Lord, we do for him everything we have to do. And then if our work be only smoothing out the children's hair, or putting mats over the worn places in the carpet, nevertheless, it we do it as toward the Lord, his smile rests on us, and the beauty of the Lord remains on us. I cannot tell you how often this text lifts the black out of the sky and puts blue in. Do you remember when anything goes against the grain, that if you do it as toward the Lord, his smile rests on you? And the consciousness of his smile is the sweetest thing in all the world.

Because of this union with the Lord, he is with us in our trials and in our troubles. When in New York, last week, one sent to me: "Come and see some one to whom you used to minister." And I said: "Yes." And I found her very aged, her hair as white as the driven snow, very pale and very sick. And she said: "Do you know how you once helped me?" I said: "No! did I help you?" And she said: "You told me of a little fellow whose father was moving his library up stairs, and he wanted to help his father; and he took a heavy dictionary, but could only carry it as far as the stairs, and then he could do no more. Then the little fellow cried from disappointment; his father heard, came to him, lifted him up (book and all) and carried him where he could himself place the book on the shelf in the new library," And the woman said: "This is what the Lord has done for me. He has taken me and carried me—my sufferings and myself." "Well," I said, "do not fear about the future; if the Lord has carried you so far, he will not fail you in the last moment." "I know he will not," she said.

Because of this union the believer may have assurance of his future salvation. If I am a member of Christ's body, then it is absolutely certain that he will bring me where he himself is.

"If he in heaven has fixed his throne,
He'll fix his members there."

A man is not drowned, though his feet are under water, if his head is above the water. The billows are not above the Lord, and he is the head. We shall not be overwhelmed.

This, then, is a union vital and a union indissoluble. He will transform us into his likeness. He will be with us in our duties; will be with us in our sufferings, carrying us through them. He will not let us fail or fall. We are safe in union thus with him.

Then it is our duty to cling to this union—to keep the consciousness of it.

I noticed in the Park the other day how the trees seemed to be thrusting themselves into the coming of the spring—pushing themselves into the warmer air. It seemed as if the buds on the branches were swelling a little to meet the spring.

What we are to do is to hold ourselves in close connection with Jesus Christ. We are not better Christians because the sluices of this union are too much shut up. Cultivate this union, and we shall grow mightily in grace. Let us abide in Christ by a complete consecration of ourselves to him; and then we shall grow in grace, and duty will be easy, and the pang will be taken out of pain.

## XII.

## THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE HELP.

THE early Christians, to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed, were in difficult circumstances. I suppose it is impossible for us to conceive these difficulties. To accept as the Messiah, as the Promised One, as the One who was the substance of all the wonderful and shining ritual that was going on in the temple; to accept as the true Messiah the Nazarene who had been crucified not so long ago on the hill outside the city; to give him worship and reverence, and to turn their backs upon the worship of the temple with which every fibre of Jewish patriotism was interwoven, compelled the utmost sacrifice.

I have recently been talking with a young man whose surroundings throw a little light upon the difficulty. This young man is of a Roman Catholic family in a distant country.

He has come here and has listened to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has become convinced that salvation is not faith in any rite or church, but is faith in the Saviour, and that the thing for him to do is to accept and bravely confess it. As he has talked to me about confessing him, I have seen the difficulty. When he makes that decision, and turns his back on the church of his relatives, there will be coldness and misunderstanding; it will be the breaking up of his home, possibly. It seemed to him as if it were a very difficult cross; and yet our Lord tells us if we love father and mother more than him, we are not worthy of him; and the only thing for this man to do is to confess Christ and turn his back upon the absurdities of the church apostate.

Such an instance as that helps us a little to understand what must have been the sacrifice demanded of the early Hebrew Christian. It struck very deeply into their lives, and thrust them from family, from friends, and, in many cases, from livelihood. It was not so wonderful that there should spring up in them danger of

apostasy, of turning back; that they should sometimes question whether, after all, the shining temple on Mount Moriah might not be the place of worship, and not the little despised company of Christians. When one became a Christian, the burial service was read over the person, the ancestral door was closed, and all communication with loved ones stopped. It was a very hard thing to be a Christian. What these early Christians needed was some strong certainty of the divine presence and help; and this Epistle to the Hebrews is written to assure them that God would be with them even though they were confronted with such obstacles. In the closing chapter, the writer does not forget how much they needed the comfort of the certainty of the divine help, for as he is gathering up the last things to tell them, he is careful to say: "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

We are not in such hard circumstances as these early Christians, and yet as they needed that comfort, we need it. This is a world, not finished but in process; and since it is a world in

process, there must be trial in it. I was passing, not long since, by a great building, not yet completed; the street was filled with piles of materials, beds of mortar here and there, workmen hammering at stones—all noise and confusion. But there was no real confusion, for all the diverse and noisy industry was grasped by the idea of the building into unity. Only the stones had to have ever so much hammering before they could be fashioned for their right place in the wall of the great building. And that is like our world. It is in process of building, and we therefore need to be sculptured that we may be fitted for the place the Divine Architect intends us to fill. And so trial must be in the world; we cannot escape it; it is in the nature of things.

I have only just come from the funeral of one of the sweetest Christians I ever knew, a member of this church. When we laid her away in a distant cemetery, the cold was very bitter, and it seemed a hard, strange thing that she must be left there. No; she was not there. Only her body was there; but we associate a person so with the body. She is in the wealth and glory

of the shining city; but sorrow hangs heavy around the house from which she is gone. That is not an unusual experience; we either have passed through it, or shall. Death knocks with equal hand at the hovel of the poor or the door of the rich. We cannot keep our treasures in this world. We need the certainty of the comfort of the divine help just as the early Christians did; and we may have it; for as the Lord said to those early Christians, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," does he not say the same thing to us? That is the distinct promise of God, and his word cannot be broken. To you and to me, he says, whatever may come, be sure of this: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Let us think a little as to how God says this to us. I think it would be better for us all if we were more on the hunt for how God says it to us in nature. Do you ever take a walk with a religious intent, to see if you can find evidences of God's care for you as you walk. You would be following the example of the Master if you did. That is a very significant passage where

John sees Jesus coming to him, our version says, but the correct version is, where John sees Jesus taking a walk, as though our Lord were wont thoughtfully to walk. And certainly our Lord noticed nature—"Consider the lilies of the field."

A good many years ago, I was on the St. Lawrence river, and I thought I could go off and read on an island where I would be quite alone. I lay on the grass in the summer weather and read, and as I read my eye wandered from the page, and I saw a little harebell with the most delicate, finely colored petals, with the most hairlike stem; so tenuous the stem was that it could hardly support, apparently, the slight weight of the flower. In the flower, I saw nestling a tiny drop of dew. When I saw this dewdrop in the cup of the frail flower, I could not help thinking how God does take care of things. Here is this little flower nestling among the grass, and yet God has not forgotten to minister to it, to minister what it needs. I read a lesson of wonderful help to myself about God's care and presence. I said to myself: "If God so cares for this slight flower as that it does not

miss its dewdrop, he will surely care for me." And the tender flower preached a really helpful sermon.

I think it would be better for us all if we used such things often. There are multitudes of such things to see if we only look around us. The song sparrows teach me many a lesson; they are such brave birds. Long before the grass is green and the buds begin to swell, if you will walk by the thickets in the park, you will hear the wonderful trill—so tender so sweet—of the sparrow. I would rather hear it than the classical music; I can understand the bird. Long before the sun has touched the earth I have stood by some thicket and heard the song sparrow, and the bird was just as brave as could be. It did not look like summer; there was no sign of summer around; yet the bird trusted its instinct that the summer was surely coming. If in such chill weather the bird is so sure the summer will not desert it, I may be sure that the summer will not desert me. If you will listen, you will find that God has really said to us in nature: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

By distinct promise he says this to us, and to us much more than to those early Christians. The Bible those early Hebrew Christians had was the Bible of the Old Testament; they had not much of the New Testament at that time, probably only as it was spoken to them by the Evangelists. I looked up some of the references about this passage. Away back in Genesis he says it to Jacob, who is in the wilderness with nothing but a stone for a pillow; but God does not forget him, and this is his promise: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Then, again, when Joshua is about to take up a very onerous and difficult duty, Moses is giving him command over the children of Israel. By the way, that is a beautiful thing that is written on the bust of John Wesley in Westminster Abbey: "God buries the workers, but he carries on the work." It was so with these Israelites now; Moses is going, and Joshua is about to take his

place, and God comes to him and says: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

When Solomon is about to take up the kingdom from the trembling and aged hand of his father David, there is the same promise for him: "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee."

The Psalmist is looking back on a long experience, and this is the statement of his experience—it is a psalm of David, I believe: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

We have the distinct promise just as those early Christians had, and what we want to do is that which they must have done if they were comforted with the certainty of the divine presence and help—that is, believe the promise. The trouble with us is that we believe ourselves more than we do the promise. We go down into ourselves and pull ourselves to pieces and wonder why we feel so; it would be a great deal better

for us if we were to cease to regard our feelings and look out on the promise of God. If you take hold of the promise, the feeling would be all right. We too often put the cart before the horse. The true order is the faith first, and then the feeling appropriate to the faith follows, looking out of ourselves and taking hold of God's word; for he hath said, and he said it by distinct promise: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

And so also God has said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" by the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's utmost gift. He can say no more. Having given us the Lord Jesus, since the greater always includes the less, he has given us in Christ everything we need, and therefore he has given us in Christ the certainty of his help and presence. When you are discouraged and disheartened, and want to know if it is true that God cares for you and is with you, I think it would be a good plan for you to go away by yourself and open a Bible at the eighth chapter of Romans, and read the thirty-first and thirty-second verses: "What shall we then say

to these things. If God be for us, who can be against us?" But how am I to know that God is for me? The apostle goes on to tell us. This is the reason: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Since God has given us Christ, he has given us everything we need—his presence and his help. If it ever seems to you as though he had not done so, turn back upon the fact that precisely as the sunlight gives everything that belongs to the day, so God in giving Jesus Christ has given us everything we need. Somebody has worked the problem out in a little poem:

If I could only surely know
That all the things that tire me so
  Were noticed by my Lord,—
The pang that cuts me like a knife,
The lesser pains of daily strife,—
  What peace it would afford!

I wonder if he really shares
In all these little human cares,
  This mighty King of kings?
If he who guides through boundless space
Each blazing planet in its place

Can have the condescending grace
To mind these petty things?

It seems to me, if sure of this,
Blent with each ill would come such bliss
That I might covet pain,
And deem whatever brought to me
The loving thought of Deity,
And sense of Christ's sweet sympathy,
Not loss, but richest gain.

Dear Lord, my heart shall no more doubt
That thou dost compass me about
With sympathy divine.
The love for me once crucified
Is not the love to leave my side,
But waiteth ever to divide
Each smallest care of mine.

I am sure, if we would just think about it, we should be able to discover that God's promise not to leave us nor forsake us has been fulfilled in the personal experience of every one of us. How many times I have heard people say like this: "If any one had told me beforehand that I could go through with the trouble I have gone through with, I should never have believed it. I should have sunk in the presence of it, and yet I have gone through,

and I have been helped." Is that not the experience of some of you? Have you not found that when real stress came, somehow there was strength supplied? Really, I think it is the verdict of your Christian experience that God does not leave you, does not forsake you.

The way to live a strong, victorious life is to believe that he hath said "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee"; and the way to get the consciousness of the comfort of God's presence and help is just to lay hold of that promise, precisely as those early Christians had to do. You can see how they must have managed it, confronted by such difficulties and compelled to such sacrifices. Here is the Hebrew Christian with home turned against him; parents hard; support, livelihood gone; alone and deserted. What is for him? This is for him: God hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." How is he to get the comfort of it? Just by believing what God says. That is the way for him, and we must get the comfort in the same manner.

Since God has given us this promise, what follows? It follows that since we have such a

God, we ought to give ourselves gladly and lovingly in service; for the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews goes on to say: "Let your conversation be without covetousnesss." That is to say, do not be thinking of yourself all the time, but serve. It has reference to money; but it does not have entire reference to money. We may be very covetous in certain directions, though we are very generous with our money; we may refuse to give ourselves in personal service. Since we have a God who does comfort and care for us, let us be ready to give ourselves in service.

Since God has promised "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," let us be content. "Be content," the author of the Epistle says, "with such things as ye have." That does not mean that you should be lazy; that does not mean that, being in circumstances narrow, you should not want to get into circumstances wider; but that, being in circumstances strait, you are to be trustful and believing.

Since God has said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," to the heart of such a God we can pray. Let us be prayerful. In everything

with prayer and supplication let us make our requests known unto him. Do not think anything is too little to talk to God about; do not think anything is too small, if it is hard for you, to claim God's interest.

I read a little poem about an Eastern legend:

Once in an Eastern palace wide
  A little child sat weaving;
So patiently her task she plied,
The men and women at her side
  Flocking round her, almost grieving.

"How is it, little one," they said,
  "You always work so cheerily?
You never seem to break your thread,
Or snarl or tangle it, instead
  Of working smooth and clearly.

"Our weaving gets so worn and soiled,
  Our silk so frayed and broken:
For all we've fretted, wept, and toiled,
We know the lovely pattern's spoiled
  Before the king has spoken."

The little child looked in their eyes
  So full of care and trouble,
And pity chased the sweet surprise
That filled her own, as sometimes flies
  The rainbow in a bubble.

"I only go and tell the king,"
She said, abashed and meekly;
"You know he said in everything——"
"Why, so do we!" they cried, "we bring
Him all our troubles weekly."

She turned her little head aside;
A moment let them wrangle;
"Ah, but," she softly then replied,
"I go and get the knot untied
At the first little tangle!"

Oh, little children—weavers all!
Our broidery we spangle
With many a tear that would not fall
If on our King we would but call
At the first little tangle.

Oh, little children, and large children too, let us call on him at the first tangle! We have right to, for he is a God who hath said: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We may have the comfort of the certainty of his presence and of his help.

## XIII.

## AN ANCIENT CHRISTIAN'S THOUGHT OF CHRIST.

ONE Abercius was the pastor of the church in Hieropolis, way back almost under the shadows of the apostles' times. In the year 1882, Mr. W. M. Ramsay came upon his tomb, which had been long unknown. On the tomb there was an epitaph written in coarse Greek characters, and a part of that epitaph was: "Abercius, by name, I am a disciple of the pure Shepherd, who feeds his herds of sheep on the mountains and plains, who has great eyes that look on all sides." This is beautiful; and it is also significant of certain real and great truths which the early Christians held with greater tenacity than we are wont to hold them; and yet those truths it is most needful that we ourselves keep constantly in mind. The first truth that comes out from this epitaph is that in the

thought of those Christians closest to the time of Christ, our Lord was intensely believed to be not dead but alive. This ancient Christian calls himself a disciple of the pure Shepherd who feeds,—that is to say, who is now doing so,—who has not left his disciples, but who is now with them and caring for them.

It is remarkable how steadily these early Christians kept in mind this idea of Christ, not as one who was dead, but as one who is alive. In the Catacombs under the foundations of the City of Rome, where the early Christians were wont to lay their dead (there are as many as six or seven million graves in the Catacombs), you find rarely such thing as a representation of the cross. That would strike us first as something singular; but the meaning of the fact is that the thought of the early Christians was not so much of a Christ upon a cross, as it was of a Christ to whom that cross was but a great incident, who had passed through the cross to death, and had mastered death in the resurrection.

We may take to ourselves a healthful example from these ancient Christians. We cannot think

too much of our Lord as our atoning sacrifice; but it is possible for us to think too little of him as one who, while he did die, is now alive forevermore, and has the keys of death and hell. What we need to do is to live more in the light that streams upon us from our Saviour's resurrection. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not away from this world, but is in this world. When any one of the great teachers or leaders of men die, then, so far as they are personally concerned with this world, the world has lost them. Plato is dead, and as toward this world only his influence remains; Socrates is dead, and as toward this world only his influence remains; Napoleon the Great is dead, and as toward this world only his influence remains. Those whom we have loved have gone hence, and as toward us only their influence remains; they are in no sense personally present. But our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the world by the Holy Spirit. He is not a distant Christ, not a Christ in order to find whom we must go on a long and difficult pilgrimage; but he is a Christ for the daily trial, a Christ for the particular and crushing trouble, a

Christ for joy, a Christ for sorrow, a Christ living and personally present with us.

Let the music of that old epitaph sink more into your hearts. Disciples of "the pure Shepherd, who feeds his herds of sheep on the mountains and plains, who has great eyes that look on all sides." Believe more in a living Christ; be thankful that your sins have been forgiven through the atonement, but be just as thankful that, because Christ has mastered death in the resurrection, from him to you may flow all power, all inner strength, and peace, and joy. What we need to do, every one of us, is what these early Christians did so thoroughly—believe in a living Christ; one who was dead, but who is alive again. We think too much about our Lord as one who has gone away from us; we should think of our Lord as one who is with us. Did he not tell the disciples, "I go away, and come again unto you." "If any man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." He said in effect: "I will send the Comforter, and he will be with you; he shall

lead you, teach you, guide you." We are in contact with a present Christ, because we are in contact with a living Christ.

From this epitaph of this ancient Christian, we get the idea that he believed in our Lord Christ as a providing Christ. "I am a disciple of that pure Shepherd who feeds his herds of sheep"—that is to say, one who sees his sheep, where they are, who they are, what they are doing, and what they need. How beautiful the truth, found away back here in the shadows, expressed with a kind of rude poetry, "the Shepherd with great eyes who sees on all sides." Since that is so, you and I cannot escape notice. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine."

In wonderfully beautiful ways does this come out in the remains that we have of the early Christians. For instance, if you go into those Catacombs, and study the frescoes, or if you go into museums where the rude frescoes have been gathered, you will see how this truth of the regarding Christ, the one who with great eyes sees on all sides, comes steadily out. A very favorite picture in these rude frescoes is the pic-

ture of the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew children walking in it, and the form of a fourth by their side. How much that meant to those early Christians, who had seen their friends scalded with pitch, and set up in Nero's gardens, and lighted as torches, while his furious and frightful sports went on! What a revelation to them of the regarding Christ that ancient story would be! Another of these frescoes is a picture of Daniel in the lion's den, unharmed amid the wild beasts. We can see how much that must have been to those early Christians who had seen the lions leap from their cages out into the arena to smite down the aged and young martyrs. With what relief would that ancient Scripture story come to them, as illustrating the fact that this Shepherd with great eyes saw on all sides, saw them in their trouble, in their distress, in their martyrdom.

When you look at the inscriptions of the Catacombs, you find this constantly coming out: This loving, regarding Shepherd is not a shepherd who fails us in the death hour, but is one who gives us his own life. Nothing is more startling

than the difference between the heathen inscriptions upon tombs and the inscriptions upon early Christian tombs. Here are a few of the heathen inscriptions:

"Farewell, oh, farewell! O most sweet, forever and eternally farewell!"

"Our hope was in our boy—now all is ashes and lamentation." "Fortune makes many promises, but keeps none; live for the present." But in the Christian inscription you find a light, a peace, a joy, and a certain hope and faith in the regarding Shepherd:

"Fructuosus, thy soul is with the just."

"Constantia, ever faithful, went to God."

"Eternal peace be to thee, in Christ."

"Juventianus lives."

What a challenge against death sounds in this simple inscription on one of those early graves!

How sure these early Christians were that the Shepherd regarded them, and went with them through the dark valley, leading them into the better and truer and higher life beyond.

In the symbols of this time, the same truth comes out—their certainty that the Shepherd with large eyes, who saw on all sides, held them each one in his vision. The dove betokens the presence and the blessing of the Holy Spirit; the ark betokened safety amid all storms; the anchor betokened steadfastness, though the tempests blow terrifically.

We may well learn over again some of these truths which were so precious to these early Christians. We hold them, but not as deeply, not as really as they did. Christ lives, Christ protects, Christ regards. "He is the pure Shepherd, feeding his sheep on the mountains and plains, who has great eyes that look on all sides." If that is true, our living Christ regards you and me; and surely it is true, for precisely this is the teaching of Scripture. This makes prayer real. How easy it is to pray into the heart of a Christ like this! We do not pray to mechanism, to fate, to destiny; that would be useless: but we do pray into the sensitive, loving heart of such a Shepherd as this. If he is One who sees on all sides, you and I can pray to him about every-

thing that troubles us, and everything that interests us. Do not let us restrict the area of prayer; do not let us think we may pray about this or that, but not about the other. Let us remember that the apostle tells us with prayer and supplication concerning everything we are to make our wants known unto God, and so have the peace of God a constant sentinel around our hearts.

There is plenty to discourage us in ourselves. In myself I find an evil nature; in myself I find a wayward and a weak will; in myself I find only partially sanctified affection. The confession of the apostle is the universal confession: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." There is within us the consciousness of a struggle; we are in a campaign; we have not yet entered into the triumph and into the peace; and when we look at ourselves there is every reason for discouragement; but when we keep our eye fastened on this pure Shepherd, the Loving One, the Providing One, the Regarding One, what reason for encouragement! From ourselves let us look away to him;

let us heed the injunction of the Scripture, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." For every look at yourself, give ten looks to Christ. Be sure you have that proportion; when you introvert, there is only discouragement; from yourself, look upward and outward.

Since we have such a Shepherd, how sweet to him is service, and even though our service be a poor sort, as it seems to us, he rightly interprets our motives and notices what we do for him.

Here is the truth in a most beautiful poem:

I was sitting alone in the twilight,
With spirit troubled and vexed
With thoughts that were morbid and gloomy,
And faith that was sadly perplexed.

Some homely work I was doing
For the child of my love and my care,
Some stitches half wearily setting
In the endless need of repair.

But my thoughts were about the building,
The work some day to be tried;
And that only the gold and the silver
And the precious stones should abide.

And remembering my own poor efforts,
The wretched work I had done,
And even when trying most truly,
The meagre success I had won;

"It is nothing but wood, hay, and stubble,"
I said: "It will all be burned—
This useless fruit of the talents
One day to be returned.

"And I have so longed to serve him;
And sometimes I know I have tried;
But I'm sure when he sees such a building,
He will never let it abide."

Just then as I turned the garment,
That no rent should be left behind,
My eye caught an odd little bundle
Of mending and patchwork combined.

My heart grew suddenly tender,
And something blinded my eyes
With one of those sweet intuitions
That sometimes make us so wise.

Dear child! she wanted to help me;
I know 'twas the best she could do;
But oh! what a botch she had made it,
The gray mismatching the blue!

And yet—can you understand it?
With a tender smile and a tear,
And a half-compassionate yearning,
I felt her grow more dear.

Then a sweet voice broke the silence,
And the dear Lord said to me:
"Art thou tenderer for the little child
Than I am tender for thee?"

Then straightway I knew his meaning
So full of compassion and love,
And my faith came back to its refuge,
Like the glad returning dove.

For I thought, when the Master Builder
Comes down his temple to view
To see what rents must be mended
And what must be builded anew,

Perhaps, as he looks o'er the building,
He will bring my work to the light,
And seeing the marring and bungling
And how far it is from right,

He will feel as I felt for my darling,
And will say as I said to her:
"Dear child! she wanted to help me
And love for me was the spur.

"And for the real love that was in it,
The work shall seem perfect as mine;
And because it was willing service
I will crown it with plaudit divine."

And there in the deepening twilight,
I seemed to be clasping a hand,
And to feel a great love constrain me
Stronger than any command.

Then I knew by the thrill of sweetness
'Twas the hand of the Blessed One,
Which would tenderly guide and hold me
Till all my labor is done.

So my thoughts are nevermore gloomy,
My faith no longer is dim:
But my heart is strong and restful
And mine eyes are unto him.

He is such a loving, regarding Shepherd, the "One with the great eyes who sees on all sides," that he looks at motive more than at outward deed. He interprets outward deed by the motive out of which it springs, and therefore understands the service perfectly. If it is a service that springs out of love, no matter how poor, it is beautiful in his vision—the vision of him who sees on all sides.

Then, if it be true that this Shepherd of ours is a Shepherd loving, a Shepherd providing, a Shepherd regarding, we shall not miss our way: he will surely bring us to the consummation.

We would understand just why along such strange paths he leads, but he knows where the green pastures are, and where the still waters flow. It is that our souls may be refreshed that he leads us so strangely; we shall reach at last the better and the brighter country. He who sees on all sides can make no mistake. We are in safe guidance; let us trust; let us be glad; let us patiently follow.

# XIV.

## OUR "DAKEEL."

I GOT new light upon some passages of Scripture when I heard of an Eastern custom of hospitality. An Arab, surrounded by enemies and hard pressed, finding he cannot save himself, has one resource left: he may call the name of some sheikh, whom he will henceforth serve. Then the enemies must each seek to bring the fugitive into the presence of this sheikh. The moment the sheikh (his "Dakeel") sees him, he is pledged to take him under his protection. This custom brought to my mind the words, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe"—finding safety in his Dakeel. "The righteous runneth into it and is safe." The Lord is *stability*. His name, Jehovah, holds infiniteness of meaning; but I suppose the translation in Exodus is as good as can be found: "I am that I am." I am the

One who always is, always will be, and the One who remains. The underlying idea is stableness. Everything in this world is in constant flux and flow. Our life is passing; even the world itself is a passing world. Standing in the vale of Chamouni, looking at the sharp, sky-piercing peaks of Mt. Blanc, it would seem that if anything in the world were stable, these were stable. Yet all the while these mountains are changing. Frosts bite into them and cause disintegration; the glaciers carry with them the debris of the rocks; the soil is spread upon the plain below.

Our plans are ever changing; obstacles block our way; we have disappointment instead of fruition. As life goes on, how short it seems! The years take to themselves added swiftness.

"But a week is so long!" he said,
With a toss of his curly head.
"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven!
Seven whole days! Why, in six, you know
(You said it yourself—you told me so),
The great God up in heaven
Made all the earth, and the seas, and skies,
The trees and the birds and the butterflies.
How can I wait for my seeds to grow?

"But a month is so long!" he said,
With a droop of his boyish head.
"Hear me count, one, two, three, four,
Four whole weeks, and three days more!
Thirty-one days! and each will creep
As the shadows crawl over yonder steep;
Thirty-one nights! and I shall lie
Watching the stars climb up the sky.
How can I wait till a month is o'er?

"But a year is so long!" he said,
Uplifting his bright young head.
"All the seasons must come and go
Over the hills, with footsteps slow—
Autumn and winter, summer and spring.
Oh, for a bridge of gold, to fling
Over the chasm, deep and wide,
That I might cross to the other side,
Where she is waiting—my love, my bride!

"Ten years may be long!" he said,
Slowly raising his stately head.
"But there's much to win, there's much to lose:
A man must labor, a man must choose,
And he must be strong to wait.
The years may be long; but who would wear
The crown of honor, must do and dare.
No time has he to toy with fate
Who would climb to manhood's high estate.

"Ah! life is not long," he said,
Bowing his grand white head.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—
Seventy years! as swift their flight
As swallows cleaving the morning light,
Or golden beams at even.
Life is short as a summer night,
How long, O God, is eternity?"

But God remains. He is the same prayer-hearing God, because he is Jehovah, "the one who remains."

He is a Strong Tower because he is the Justifying One. One of his sweetest names is found in Jer. 23: 5, 6, "Jehovah Tsidkenu," The Lord our Righteousness. "I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper. In his days Judah shall be saved, and this is his name whereby he shall be called—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." When we think of ourselves and of our sinful condition, we need to feel that our Lord justifies us by imputing to us his own righteousness so that we stand complete in him.

A word used for sin is transgression. It means, to go athwart. How many times when God has said "Thou shalt," we have said "No" to God,

have gone athwart God's law? How many of us are transgressors? All of us.

Iniquity is a word full of significance. Our will should lie parallel with God's demands; but it often does not. Our life is unequal to them. There is inequality, iniquity.

That other word which is used to set forth the meaning of sin—wrong—means wrung. How often have we allowed ourselves to be wrung out of our convictions of duty into that which is contrary to them! We must every one say, as the Publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." How can we ever meet God, how can we call him "Abba," how can we close the chasm between our sinfulness and his purity? Our answer is found in this beautiful name: "The Lord our Righteousness." We had sinned, and in some sense Jesus Christ stands in our place. Nothing in the world will satisfy the demands of the human heart but the doctrine of a Substitutionary Atonement. Nothing is found against us, since he has accepted for us what we deserved.

That name implies also the righteousness of Obedience—obedience for us. The law demands

that we keep the law; but we do not keep the law. So Jesus has satisfied the law, being "made in the likeness of sinful flesh." In this respect, then, of obedience, also, his righteousness is complete. So we may, when in the power of our enemies, call upon the Lord, our Dakeel, and be safe. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "We are complete in him."

"Jehovah Shalom"—the Lord is Peace. Disaster and destruction were all over the land. The Israelite was ground down. He had to hide even to get a little bread. And the Lord commanded Gideon to "Go and save Israel." And when Gideon feared, God said, "I will be with thee"; and then Gideon accepted the duty. He built an altar, and called it Jehovah Shalom.

Two sticks placed one across the other is a cross. But place them parallel, and there is no cross. When we surrender our wills to God, when we make his will ours, then there is the shining blessedness of the soul within. Then we say, "Jehovah Shalom" "God is peace."

How can we run into the name of the Lord? By thinking more of him than of the things

that bother us. I remember riding once on horseback over a very rough road, and yet I did not think much of the roughness, because I was all the time thinking of the fine prospect I was to see at the end. So we need not think of the spiritual difficulties and dangers, but keep our thoughts ever on the Lord, the changeless One, the peace-giving One, and we shall be safe.

Further, we must run into the Lord, as our Dakeel, by prayer. If this text does nothing more for you than just to get into your thought more really and more deeply the determination that "by prayer and supplication you make known your requests unto him," it will be much. Concerning everything, you may talk to God, may run to him as a strong tower. Do not stop to ask if you may pray about a material thing. The Lord awaited the disciples with a fire kindled and fish laid thereon, and bread. So the Lord considers our material wants, and we pray about everything; and in that way we may run into the name of the Lord and be safe.

Another way to do this is actually to do it. And there is the trouble with most of us. We

don't do it. We want to, and we mean to; but when it comes to the actual thing, we don't do it. Say, "Lord Jesus thou art a strong tower, and I am a persecuted soul. There are all sorts of Amalekites about me inwardly and outwardly, and there are ever so many burdens on my back. Now, Jehovah justifying, Jehovah delivering, Jehovah providing, Jehovah my peace, I accept thy grace." And let us actually do it, and we shall find that like a strong tower of defense will be our Lord.

And so at last, in some measure, we shall be able to sing and feel the sentiments of about the sweetest hymn concerning the Christian life to be found in any literature. It is that of Miss Waring:

Father, I know that all my life
  Is portioned out for me,
And the changes that are sure to come
  I do not fear to see,
But I ask thee for a present mind,
  Intent on pleasing thee.

I ask thee for a thoughtful love,
  Through constant watching wise,

To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And to wipe the weeping eyes;
And a heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathize."

[And we shall have it, if we make the Lord our strong tower.]

I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
Or secret thing to know,
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go.

Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate;
And a work of lowly love to do
For the Lord on whom I wait.

So I ask thee for the daily strength,
To none that ask denied,
And a mind to blend with outward life,
While keeping at thy side;

[You are not to be a John the Baptist.]

Content to fill a little space
If thou be glorified.

And if some things I do not ask
In my cup of blessings be,
I would have my spirit filled the more
With grateful love to thee—
More careful—not to serve thee much,
But to please thee perfectly.

[Look out for your love, and the service will be well enough.]

There are briars besetting every path,
That call for patient care;
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer;
But a lowly heart that leans on thee
Is happy anywhere.

In a service which thy will appoints
There are no bonds for me;
For my inmost heart is taught "the truth"
That makes thy children "free;"
And a life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty.

## XV.

## PAUL'S "CAN."

PAUL, in his Epistle to the Philippians, says: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." What a jubilant word that was! He was at this time living in Rome in a hired house. But that does not suggest to us, living as we do, the reality. When we speak of a hired house, we think of a house with several rooms and some largeness and comfort. That was not the case with the apostle's hired house, which he lived in at Rome. In Rome, the people spent most of their time outdoors, in the Forum, in the Campus Martius, in the bath. The houses were more like the tenement houses of New York than anything else; they were built so high that during the reign of Augustus an edict was passed restricting their height to twelve stories. The cities in those days were built compactly. That was

necessary because they must be defended and surrounded by walls. It was a very damp and foul-smelling place, this hired house of Paul's, if it was in the Jewish quarter of the city, as it probably was. Even now that section is almost the most stenchful place in the world. So in this very mean sort of a place, Paul was a prisoner for something like two years, and I suppose never stepped beyond the threshold of the door. He was under the Praetorian guard, the *elite* corps of the Roman army. One of these was detailed to watch him; he must be chained by the wrist to one of them. The soldier would get through his watch and go out, but the apostle stayed there about two years. I suppose the poorest person in this city lives in a better place than the apostle's hired house in which he dwelt so long during his first captivity in Rome. In such circumstances of discomfort, he sends out this jubilant word of his. He tells us in the last chapter of Philippians, which is the most joyful letter he wrote: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is the song of a triumphant life.

Paul's "can" does not come from living easily. The aptest symbol to me of a merely easy life is a mass of sea weed. Many a time, I have seen it dashed upon the waves—just a mass of weed that goes anywhere, wherever the winds may blow it, or the tides may toss. That is the best symbol of a merely easy-going life; it means nothing; it takes root nowhere; it is merely passive and lacks organization. No true life can ever be lived in that way. Yesterday, I was walking in the spring weather, under the trees, in the country. I was looking at some of the just sprouting trees. It is by no means an easy-going life that a tree has, for the acorn must fall to the ground, and then the swelling contents must burst the hard, brown capsule, and then down into the earth the root must go, and forth out of the earth the plumule must push itself, and then it must go into contest with all sorts of things—with the winds, with the shadows of the great trees over it, with this hostile thing and that hostile thing. Still, notwithstanding all this, and in contest with all this, the germ must push its root downward and its

plumule upward, until it puts out branches, and then hangs leaves on the branches; and so pushes on and up until it gets to be a pillared monarch of the forest—a very different sort of thing from the sea weed. Anything that means value always comes out of contest. Paul's life was a life of contest. His life was not that of the sea weed, but that of the strong oak, which can reach its dignity only through contest. Whatever gets up, must struggle up; and this is true of the Christian life. If you are going to be dashed here, there, and yonder,—if you do not thrust the roots of your life down deep in truth, do not seek to push up more nobly into higher and purer living,—you never can say the apostle's "can." It has no part in the life that is merely easy-going. Every real life is one that comes out of difficulty.

Also, this "can" of Paul's does not come out of living heedlessly, that is to say, without a purpose. Of course, you must know how stringently Paul's life was girded with a purpose; there was one thing that he was determined to do. He tells us what it was here in this Epistle

to the Philippians: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." The apostle had been a Christian twenty-five years, yet he counted himself not yet to have apprehended. Never swell yourself up with any such miserable notion as that you have reached perfection. "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The apostle's life was one full of purpose. He meant to do, and therefore he said "I can do."

This "can" does not come out of a life that is not filled with distinct attack on evil. I am sure that the Apostle Paul was troubled with a besetting sin; indeed, he as much as tells us that he had a besetting sin in that wonderful seventh chapter of Romans: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." One of the apostle's troubles was a tendency to great impa-

tience. You find that in an indirect way coming out. For instance, here, in the twenty-third chapter of Acts, when the high priest commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth, Paul's impatience gathered itself up, and he burst out: "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" Paul was a very alert man, strong with energy. He could not brook oppression, and when men went against him, his tendency was to smite them with quick, sharp speech. (There may be people living yet who are like the apostle in this respect.) But he did not let this go on; he struggled against this besetting sin, and in the ninth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians he tells us how: "And every man that striveth for the mastery (Paul wanted to master himself) is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore run not as uncertainly (the figure is of one running in the arena, who takes straight course for the goal). So fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep

under my body and bring it into subjection." So with all the saints. The apostle's "can" does not come out of a heedless life; a life without strong purpose does not see and seize and definitely strike at that which antagonizes the pure and true.

Dr. Culross, in his most interesting book on the Apostle John, says: "Naturally and originally volcanic, capable of profoundest passion and daring, he is new-made by grace, till in his old age he stands out in calm grandeur of character and depth and largeness of soul, with all the gentlenesses and graces of Christ adorning him —a man, as I image him to myself, with a face so noble that kings might do him homage, and so sweet that children would run to him for his blessing."

Do you suppose that John reached any such grand and transformed character as that without struggle.

Paul's "can" does not come out of a prayerless life. How often Paul writes to his friends that he is praying for them, and asks them to pray for him. It is quite possible, however, for

us to be prayerless and yet be praying all the time. Dr. James Hamilton has an account of a Scotchman who had but one prayer. He was asked by his wife to pray at the bedside of their dying child.

The good man struck out on the old track, and soon came to the usual petition for the Jews. As he went on with the time-honored quotation, "Lord, turn again the captivity of Zion," his wife broke in, saying: "Eh! mon, you're aye drawn out for the Jews; but it's our bairn that's deein!" Then clasping her hands, she cried: "Lord, help us, or give us back our darling, if it be thy holy will; and if he is to be taken, oh! take him to thyself." That woman knew how to pray, which was more than her husband did.

We are to pray specifically; we are to see and seize the special weaknesses and bad tendencies that assault us, and we are to pray about them. Somebody has injured you, for instance, and you are nursing your wrath to keep it warm, like Tam O'Shanter's wife. Did you ever take that thing and pray over it? Did you take it before the Lord and ask him to tell you what you ought

to do about that special thing? If you have a tendency toward impatience, or toward pride, or melancholy, or anxiety, you are to pray about those things that assault you specially. This is the true way of self-examination—not looking into ourselves and tearing ourselves to pieces, and wondering why we don't feel this way or that way. It does not matter how you feel so you do right. But this is self-examination: Here I am with a tendency to impatience like Paul's. I am going to try to overcome that; I am going to pray to the Lord to help me to overcome that. And it is out of prayer like that that a good life comes.

Paul's "can" comes out of self-surrender. Do you not remember that journey to Damascus? Paul had been impressed with Stephen's grand character; had heard him say, when the people stoned him, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." I have no doubt that all the way to Damascus he was in contest with himself. Then came that flash of light, and he saw that he was wrong, and he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" All moral ability comes out of self-

surrender. You cannot have Christ unless you give yourself to him.

I remember distinctly one experience in my own life, when I had been very rebellious, and when I had said to myself, "I will not do what I know I ought to do." Then, I remember how, after I had been carrying on the struggle for a long time, I broke down, and I said: "Lord, I give it all up; I make a full surrender; I will do what is right." Light and peace and power came to me then, and the things I said I could not do were the things I found I could do, and have done ever since.

This "can" of Paul's comes out of a recognition of God's hand in our circumstances. I have been trying to describe to you the environment in which the apostle was. See how cheerfully and beautifully he writes in that environment: "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." He was not quarreling with his circumstances; he believed God put him there for a purpose, and he was doing for the Lord Jesus the best he could under these cir-

cumstances. There was that soldier to whom Paul was chained, and he had to come to church whether he wanted to or not; and pretty soon we begin to hear about saints in Cæsar's household. If Paul could not range the world over, he could write, and what a precious part of our New Testament comes from the apostle's letters! He did the best he could in the circumstances in which he was placed, because he recognized God's hand. There is power in that. One year, I was on a little island up in the St. Lawrence, on which there was a great, grey boulder. There was just a little break in the stone, and in that break a little bit of mullein had, somehow or other, found itself planted. There was scarcely any soil, but it was doing the very best it could; it was putting out its thick, furry leaves, and pushing itself up into flower as valorously as it could. Always do the very best you can.

This "can" of the apostle springs out of trust. It does not spring out of an easy-going life, a heedless life, a purposeless life; but it does spring out of a struggle for the right, self-surrender,

recognition of God's hand in our circumstances, and trust in Jesus Christ. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And Christ is powerful. He is the one who died to give us life, who rose again, and is at the right hand of God, dispensing power by the Holy Spirit to help every one of us in the daily life. He is a living Christ, and precisely as he wrought in the apostle, so will he work in you. Really, it is quite possible for you to rise into the jubilation and the victory of the apostle's "can."

He leads us on
By paths we did not know,
Upward he leads us. Though our steps be slow,
Though oft we faint and falter by the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day,
Yet when the clouds are gone,
We know he leads us on.

He leads us on
Through all the unquiet years;
Past all our dreamland hopes, and doubts, and fears,
He guides our steps. Through all the tangled maze
Of sin, of sorrow, and o'erclouded days
We know his will is done,
And still he leads us on.

And he at last,
After the weary strife,
After the restless fever we call life,
After the dreariness, the aching pain,
The wayward struggles which have proved in vain,
After our toils are past,
Will give us rest at last.

# XVI.

## WALKING WITH GOD.

IT is wonderful what terms of fellowship God deigns to use, expressing the relation in which we stand to him. When I think of the greatness of God; when I think how he made all the worlds, and how he is so great that all I can know of him is in the way of negation, as that he is not bounded, that there is no limit to his wisdom and powers, that he is infinite; when I think of these, I can understand how I should be bidden to worship him, and to laud him, and to praise and to exalt him, and to prostrate myself before him. It is all right.

But God would have me come near to him. He desires to have me in a sweet intimacy, in the closest nearness. How wonderful that a man should be said to "walk with God"!

"Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." And the Scripture is full of

hints and suggestions that I am to come into fellowship with God, and so to stand with him that I may walk with him.

I am not always to think of him on his throne; but as of one who is my companion in daily life. How wonderful is the condescension of God! Once, last summer, I just saw Mr. Gladstone as he was driving from his official residence. There was a great crowd gathered. One after another drove through, and then came the great man himself. I saw him somewhat nearly, and was impressed with the immense power that streamed forth from him; I thought myself fortunate to be so near him; but if he had singled me out from the crowd and had taken my arm, and had said, "Walk with me through the park," and had talked with me about his great life and about my simpler life, I should have thought it an act of great condescension. I should have felt that a great opportunity was open to me. This is just what God does. Let us think what it means to walk with God, and what it will bring to us.

One thing is the sense that he is near us. If I walk with God, I am to see God in everything.

Father has great delight in treees. When I go home, I walk about the grounds and see the trees which he has grouped together. I see why he placed this tree and that tree in artistic fashion, and why he has graded the lawn, and it is a constant delight to me; and it is an added delight to think that it is my father who has disposed all these trees. So we should think of the hand of the Father, and every flower should be to us a sacrament. Every beauty should have an added beauty, because God's hand is in it. Our religion will have glints of brightness all about us if we realize that God is in all, shining through the beams of the sun, speaking through the rippling waters. "He is closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

To walk with God is to be certain of his care. There is a divine providence about us. I like these lines of Mrs. Browning:

"Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness his rest."

To walk with God is constantly to recognize the fact of his tender personal care. It is to be conscious of his smile. Even if we be sinners, it is not needful that we be shut out from his smile; for Christ in our nature has met the doom of sin. My sin being put away, there is in me a new heart. I am "accepted in the Beloved." I have been adopted into his favor. There comes to me the divine presence in the sense of the divine indwelling. Even if I be a sinner, yet if I be a sinner trusting in Jesus, adopted and beloved, then down within my heart falls the Father's smile.

I suppose a person may be a Christian, and not have this consciousness. A man may be a Christian, and yet be so mean as to build on the one foundation only wood, hay, stubble; but this is not needful. If you do not have this divine presence within, be dissatisfied until you gain it. This possession inward is better than possession outward.

To walk with God involves believing what he says. He said it; it is true. He did it; it is right. There is no cruelty in it. The other

day, I went into a house where a great sorrow had fallen. A little child, the only one, lay dead, and yet God had done it; and because he did there was no cruelty in it. It did almost seem to me, as I tried to comfort the broken-hearted mother, that it was cruel. The mother asked me: "Why should there be children in other homes, and none here?" But it was not cruel.

We could not think of it as cruel, if we believe God's word. Dear friends, if we had more of this faith, how much it would do for us!

To walk with God is to believe what he says. I cannot walk except I take him at his word. You cannot walk with God unless you know God's word. Read it, and you will be brought into union with him.

If I walk with a friend, I talk with him. I take a walk in the park with my son, and he says: "See here, father; see that hill; see that rock; see the ice! What a place that would be for sliding! See what a place yonder would be for bicycling!" If I walk with God, I converse and commune with him about everything.

If you have trials or troubles, walk with God, and talk with him about them.

I walk with God when I constantly ask: "Will this please God?" If I would walk with God, I may not bear in my feelings anything that God would not approve: pride, envy, grudging. Perhaps you have not a consciousness of the Lord's presence. Are you allowing in you something that would displease God?

To walk with God does not take us out of life, and make monks and nuns of us. The Trappist monks must not speak to each other, must wear certain clothing, must grovel on the floor, and eat their food on the floor. This is not walking with God. Jesus "came eating and drinking," and attending marriage feasts. I may do all these; but if I walk with God, I shall do them all in the right spirit, and all will be for him.

What are the effects of walking with God? If I walk with God, I shall have God's help. That is the way we get his help. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the

behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

If I walk with God, I shall grow better. That is the true way of sanctification. There never lived a man who had got beyond the Lord's Prayer. I have heard persons say that they did not need to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." This is one of the worst delusions. But if I walk with God, then how certainly and swiftly I grow better. I am held in contact with him; I am changed into his likeness.

Here is a poor little street arab. Suppose I go to him and say: "You must not yield to your surroundings. In the midst of impurity, you must be pure. In the midst of filth, you must be clean. In the midst of dishonesty, you must be honest." How idle it would all be! But I take him out of his conditions, and, through the agency of one of the great noble societies, I send him to the far West, where he is surrounded by better influences. I put him in a comfortable home, and he sloughs off all that is bad in him.

If I walk with God, I get myself into communion with God. I say: "I walk with thee.

What displeases thee I put away." I am lifted into a new atmosphere, and so I become sanctified. And this is the true method of sanctification.

If I walk with God, I shall have joy. I have already spoken of the difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is what hangs about us like a cloak. Joy springs up within us. Suppose the skies grow dark; yet that is outward; it cannot hurt me, if I am in God.

If I walk with God how much more use and help I shall be to others. You want to be helpful; the way is to walk with God.

If I thus walk, will death be hard? It was not much for Enoch; it will not be much for me. Death will not be terrible. Shall I fear death?

"Fear Death? To feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snow begins, and the blasts denote,
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe."

I have not dying grace now; I do not want

it. I do not expect to die now. So far as I know, I am going to live. I expect to take rest to-night, to preach to-morrow, to labor through next week. Dying grace is not necessary; but if I walk with God, dying grace will come.

Dear friends, let us enter into this companionship with God. Let us walk with him. How strong you shall be; how full of help to others!

# XVII.

## CONQUERING CIRCUMSTANCES.

THIS morning, a very dear friend, who yesterday passed her seventy-second birthday, handed me a little tract on "Help for our Daily Life." The little tract had been helpful to her, and she hoped that it might be so to me. The thought came to me that perhaps it would be a helpful thing for us to consider this afternoon, "How we can be the master of circumstances, and not the victim of them."

Apparently, no man was ever more hindered and hampered than was the great apostle, the man who plowed more deeply into the lives of men than any other man except Moses; and, possibly, not even Moses was an exception. Our notion of Paul is largely wrong. He seems to us the incarnation of vigor, enterprise, strength. But this is a mistaken idea of him. So far as we can judge, he was insignificant in appear-

ance, below the usual stature, and afflicted with a physical complaint which I believe was ophthalmia, a very distressing and pitiful infirmity. As he stood or sat (as was the custom of those days) before men to whom he was personally a stranger, he had to overcome the fact that the first impression which he had made on them was hindering. And he was very sensitive; his heart was not hard, cold, indifferent to the opinion of others; he felt very deeply what others thought of him.

Then there was the hindering of his long imprisonment. It was strange that at a time when there was such need of preaching and of leadership, this disciple should have spent six years or more in prison.

But let us recall how he met and managed his hindrances. See how he speaks in the first chapter of Philippians: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that, as always, so also now, Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death." Though he is so hindered and hampered, nothing is going to

defeat him, prevent him from doing his utmost for the Lord Christ, and being triumphant in the doing. He is never the victim, but always the victor of circumstances. No one of us was ever hindered as he; yet no one of us but would say that we were under hindrances.

It may be that you are hindered by failing strength; it may be by poverty; it may be by want of position and appreciation. We have all said: "Oh, if this, or that thing were only out of the way!" We do not rise above our circumstances as Paul did. We are listless, instead of being active.

Now, how can we rise above our circumstances? This is a very important question. We have but one life. If we are not doing our duty now, and doing it nobly and grandly, we shall never do it. We shall never pass this way again. We shall never see the past week again. We shall never see this Saturday again. We shall see, perhaps, next Saturday; but that will be another, not this. If we are ever going to conquer our circumstances, we must do it now.

How can I be the master of my circumstances, and not the slave?

1. We must never forget that God's hand is in all our circumstances; he has to do with the shaping of them. We never find Paul looking back, and wishing he were out of his circumstances, and wondering how he ever did the thing which brought him into them. And yet in the events which brought him into his imprisonment, he came, I think, as near to the edge of making a mistake in his efforts at conciliating opposition, as he ever did. He had yielded to the judgment and advice of the Judaizing Christians in reference to going into the temple with the three men who had a vow upon them. We have not all the circumstances of the case; but it seems to me that, if ever he made a mistake, it was then. Out of his action came the mob at Jerusalem; out of that, his arrest, his imprisonment for a year or two, then his voyage to Rome, his shipwreck, and his confinement at Rome for two years. All this sprung out of that seemingly doubtful expedient. But Paul never goes back along his life and says: "I

made a mistake here and there." We say: "If I had not done so and so, I should not now be here." We talk as if God had nothing to do with it. No matter how sad a mistake you have made, yet in your circumstances to-day there is God's hand. God is not to be baffled because you have made a mistake. What is involved in our care for childhood but the overruling of the mistakes of our children toward their better education?

The thing for us to do is to remember that God's hand is in all, controlling all, overruling all. This is one of the surest things in the world; God will keep us in all our ways; and he is able to overrule all our mistakes. We may, we must look back and say, "I have made a mistake; I will not do the same thing again"; but we are not to feel that because we have made a mistake, God is nowhere, and his hand is not in all our circumstances.

2. We must remember that in our present circumstances, difficult as they are, we can live a life that is pure and beautiful. Now, Paul might have said: "I am chained to a Roman

soldier; I can do nothing but wait till I am released." But that would not have been living a noble life. Instead of that, he said: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed."

You may be a true Christian man or Christian woman in your circumstances. You remember the case of that little Hebrew maid, caught in a raid made by the Syrians, and carried as a slave to Syria, to the house of Naaman. She led a pious and beneficent life in her circumstances. You remember the experience of David as he was fleeing before Absalom, after he had gotten back to God. There are more psalms that belong to that terrible period of David's life than to any other.

So of Paul in his imprisonment. He could not go among his brethren and speak to them; but he could write. And see how many letters we owe to that first imprisonment; the letter to Philemon, that to the Colossians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians.

And he could preach, if not to a thousand, yet to one, to the Roman soldier who was chained to

his wrist. And as the result, he writes of "the saints that were of Cæsar's household."

Do you remember the touching story that Jean Ingelow tells of the girl in one of the Orkney Islands, who saw her father's fishing boat lost, and saw her father's body washed ashore; and ever after that she slept when others watched, and watched when others slept; every day she spun her wonted tale of woolen yarn, and then one skein more; and that extra skein went to buy a candle, which burned all night, in her little window; and many a sailor and fisherman found safety because her humble candle flung its rays far out upon the ocean. She conquered her circumstances.

Let us not say, "I can do nothing;" but rather let us say, "Let me do the little that I can."

3. Not only must we realize that we can live a noble life in our circumstances; but we must determine that we will. Here is our trouble. We long and yearn, but when it comes to the rugged doing, we do not do it. You all mean to live for the Lord Christ; but when it comes to

doing it, we only long; we do not resolve, we do not choose. Now, I long to go to Palestine; I would gladly have started last night, hard as the wind blew. But I do not choose to go. I do not determine to go. So we long; we yearn; we wish; we desire; but we do not choose; we do not will. I wish we might be more full of choice, of will.

How can I actually do this? You must take hold of the thing next you, and do it. It may be that the thing next you is the duty of confessing Christ; then do it. It may be that it is the duty of setting right some wrong that you have done; then, do it. Perhaps the thing next you is the duty of keeping a greater watch over your temper; then, do it. The only way to do it is to do it. Paul did not brood over his imprisonment; he preached to that one hearer, and to the hearer of the next day.

We are not told to do all in a lump, but one thing at a time; one door will lead to another, and that to another, and so on until, before we know it, we are free.

4. Not only is God in our circumstances; he is

controlling them to our best good. Fifty years ago in Africa, there was a boy who seemed of no value; he was a slave; once he was sold for a horse; but the man who had bought him, brought him back, and would not keep him; then he was sold for so many bottles of rum, with the same result; then for so much tobacco, and the same result followed. Then, at last he was sold to some Portuguese slave traders, and they put him, chained, in the hold of a slave ship; the ship was taken by a British cruiser, and he was released. He is now Bishop Crowther. I am sure that he thanks God for all his circumstances. God was controlling all.

It was just so with Paul. God so controlled his circumstances that the things which happened turned out to be a furtherance of the gospel.

We can live a pure and beautiful life. One of the sweetest saints I know is serving God in the imprisonment of her sick room. From the pulpit of her bed and her padded chair, she is preaching the grace and beauty of Christian patience and submission as I have rarely known it preached.

Dear friends, we make too much of our circumstances. We make our circumstances too much an excuse. We can live a true life in any circumstances, if we remember that God is in our circumstances, that he controls our circumstances; and if, in the strength of God, we begin to take hold of the duty next to us.

## XVIII.

## MY TIMES ARE IN THY HAND.

THAT is a very sweet note of trust which David strikes in the thirty-first Psalm: "My times are in thy hand." It is a great thing to have our times in the grasp of one more wise, more kind, more loving than ourselves. The Philistines had threatened a portion of the land; David had conquered them at Keilah, and delivered the people of the city out of their hands. And Saul having heard of David's whereabouts called the people together to besiege David; for he thought he could now surely capture him. But David heard of Saul's intentions, and of the purpose of the people of the place to deliver him up to Saul; so "David and his men arose and departed out of Keilah and went whithersoever they could go": he retired to a mountain, and hid himself. There Saul followed him; and David fled to another place,

entrenching himself in the wilderness of Maon. Still Saul pursues him; and he and his men surrounded the mountain in the heights of which David hides and whence he finds no possible egress. There, as was David's wont in any difficulty, he turns his heart Godward; and when it seems as if Saul's grip was sure, David is saved in a most remarkable manner. There comes word to Saul that the Philistines have broken out again; and so his attention is diverted from David; and David, without striking a single blow, is delivered from his bitter enemy. Under these circumstances this Psalm is supposed to have been written. We shall be happy just in proportion as we realize that our times do not depend upon ourselves, but are in the control of One loving, wise, and infinite.

The great argument for the truth that "my times are in God's hand" is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. I do not think this life would be worth living were it not for him; but when I really look at him, who is "the express image" of the Godhead; when I find him delicately sensitive to every human want; when I find that

he comprehends every least and even unspoken prayer; when I look at him,—all my skepticism passes away. It is a wonderfully helpful thing to think of him as he was upon the earth—of the poor woman who could only timidly lay her finger on the edge of his mantle; and yet in all the throng her touch was noticed by him. And then the prayer of the mothers, whom the rude, gruff disciples would have driven away, and the rebuke the Lord gave those disciples, in the graphic words we find in Mark, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them."

The Lord never turned away from any trouble; and he is not changed. He has changed his realm, but his heart is forevermore the same—"the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." And if the Lord was so strung with sensitiveness on the earth, he is surely not less so now, and he must notice me and regard me.

But if our times are in God's hands, what then? Well, there are a good many "what

thens." We should be relieved of a great deal of anxiety. What is anxiety? It is that which gives pain, and no pain is quite so piercing as this steady pain of anxiety, this looking into the future, and wondering if we can meet this, that, and the other thing—this trouble about your children, wishing you could see in them this thing or that, which you do not see, and wondering what will come to them if such things do not apppear in their character. It is a great deal easier for us to be anxious than to be full of faith; yet we need not be consumingly anxious. "Take no thought for the morrow" means that. It does not mean that we should not be thrifty; but it does mean that we should not be cut all to pieces with anxiety. I have read a story of John Wesley, that he was walking along with a man who was very much troubled, and who was telling him all about his troubles; and that just then they passed a meadow where a cow was looking over a stone fence, and Mr. Wesley said: "Do you know why that cow looks over the wall?" "Why, no," was the answer. "Well, that cow looks over the wall, because she

cannot look through it." And so, if I forget that my times are in God's hands, I am very apt to try to look through the wall. Dean Alford says:

"My bark is wafted on the strand
By breath divine;
And on the helm there rests a hand
Other than mine.

"One who was known in storms to sail
I have on board;
Above the roaring of the gale
I have my Lord."

Another thing you can have, if you only grip unerringly this truth, "My times are in thy hand," that is a great rest and peace in work. If I am only sure the work I am doing is the work put upon me by God, even if it may be mountainous and irksome, yet it gets a new glory, and a new shining, because it is from him. It is certain that if I do my work as toward the Lord, he will weave it into his great purposes.

It is reported of the Emperor Justinian that he said: "I will build a temple to the great God, and the glory thereof shall be mine; and

when I reach the gates of heaven, the angels will come forth and say, 'Enter, great Justinian, who built a temple to the great God.'" But when the temple was completed and the inscription carved over its portal, as the emperor had commanded —"For the great God, by the great Emperor Justinian"—a strange thing happened. On the day it was to be dedicated, it was discovered that another inscription took the place of the one he had ordered. It was this: "This house is built for the great God, by the Widow Euphrasia." And when the emperor saw it, he angrily called together all the workers, and inquired what it meant; and the chief priests said to the emperor, "This is not of man, but of God." At last, at the emperor's command, the Widow Euphrasia was found—old and thin and wrinkled and sick—and the emperor asked her what she had done. But she knew nothing about it. She had been lying on a bed of straw in an alley; and as the oxen, drawing the stone to the temple passed by the place where she lay, she noticed that the sharp stones hurt their hoofs; and she asked that the workmen

would take the straw from her bed and strew it where the oxen were passing.

Of course, this story is a fable; but, nevertheless, there is a great truth in it. If I can only be sure that God appoints my duty, even if it be a duty as slight as that, even if it be no more than the cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, then it is accepted as unto him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The Lord recognized it, and it goes into the great sum and consummation of his purposes. And so I can get content in the duty he sets against my hand. When things all seem to be at sixes and sevens, and when you long for some larger sphere, try to remember, "My times are in thy hand," and say, "I will do this duty as for God"; and I think you will then find that there is a strange worship in it. So, if I do what God appoints, I can get inward rest and peace.

Did you ever notice how, from the vestibule of that sweet truth, "The Lord is my shepherd," the Psalmist passes into a kind of temple of sweet enjoyment. Why, then, he leads me be-

side the still waters, and I will drink. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, and I shall get the rest. If I wander a little, he will bring me back. He guides me: I will not fear. Even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, why then I will not fear. Because the Psalmist could strike that first note, he could strike all the others. That was a true sentence I met the other day: "Always the gates of heaven open from within. It is what we are within ourselves that makes what we are outside of ourselves." Paul and Silas in prison knew wonderful joy, though their feet were in the stocks. And if you and I can accept the truth that God is concerned about us, we can have rest, even though we should be led as strangely as were Paul and Silas.

I should be willing to have you forget all I have said this afternoon, if you will only remember this: "My times are in thy hand." If you do that, you will not be so anxious, and you will be able to have ever so much joy in each daily duty, and you will be able to enter into the meaning of the Scripture.

Wait a little while;
Be sure
Thou'st but one short lifetime
To endure.

Wait a little while,
And trust;
Thou shalt suffer only
What thou must.

Wait a little while;
Above
Is the God who gives you pain
In his love.

Wait a little while;
His grace
Soon shall bear you quickly
To his face.

# XIX.

## WHAT WE ARE AND HAVE.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.—Galatians 4 : 6, 7.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witnesss with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.—Romans 8 : 15–17.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.—Luke 15 : 22.

WE have not received the spirit of bondage; we have received the Spirit of adoption. We are made sons. We call God "Father." The Spirit puts the ring of dignity and adoption on our finger. We are again his sons.

1. Filialness takes the place of fear. We once had the spirit of bondage. If we are not right with God, we are in terror. A holy God cannot look on us with benignity; and hence comes dread. But now comes the Spirit of adoption. We know that we are sons. We stand in a new relation.

All is wrapped up in that word "Father." Have you wondered why Paul used the Syriac word "Abba"? When we come to tell our very heart out, we always use the tongue that we spoke at our mother's knee. Nothing but the old nursery word would express his feelings. And so he says "Abba," and then he translates it into the Greek word for father.

In a most free and peculiar sense, we are sons. We have received the Spirit of adoption. There will henceforth be the fear of filialness, but no longer of dread. This filialness will give rise to the closest intercourse. We are brought into sonship so that we dare to say, "Abba," "dear Father." That is the position in which we stand to God. We shall not merely call on God for great things, but for the small as well.

There is prayer; and there is communion. If we stand in this relation to God, we shall talk to him about everything, and shall want to do his will in everything. It is "Abba, dear Father." Therefore we shall pray to him, talk to him, consult him.

2. Out of filialness springs assurance. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are sons of God. The Scripture is full of this assurance, this certainty. It is not presumption: we may know. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 1: 22, "God hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." So, too, in 2 Corinthians 5: 5: God "also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." So in Ephesians 1: 13, 14: "That holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."

There is such a thing as an internal evidence. It is not indeed of the same value as the external. There is depression among Christians, because we have been taught to expect too much inward light. The great reason for assurance is that God has said, through Christ: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But

there is an internal evidence. The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are the sons of God. There are many Christians who do not get the good they might out of their religion. It is possible to have an internal consciousness. Let us determine to have it. It comes by consecrating ourselves to God. It is sin that comes in and puts a mist between our souls and God, so that we do not see him.

We say: "The sun has set," and we sorrow sore
As we watch the darkness creep the landscape o'er,
And the thick shadows fall, and the night draws on,
And we mourn for the brightness lost, and the vanished sun:

And all the time the sun in the self-same place
Waits, ready to clasp the earth in his embrace,
Ready to give to all of his stintless ray,
And 'tis we who have "set," it is we who have turned away!

"The Lord has hidden his face," we sadly cry,
As we sit in the night of grief with no helper by.
"Guiding uncounted worlds in their courses dim,
How should our little pain be marked by him?"

But all the while that we mourn, the Lord stands near,
And the Son Divine is waiting to help and hear;

And 'tis we who hide our faces, and blindly turn away,
While the Sun of the soul shines on 'mid the perfect day.

There is ever so much more in our Christianity than we have got hold of. This witness of the Spirit is a precious thing. We get a gleam of it; but it may be the steady state of the soul.

3. There follows heirship. We have a title, not in ourselves, but in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since it is in him, it is a sure title, and nothing can prevent us from entering into our inheritance. We are heirs.

4. Though we have received this Spirit of adoption, and so come into this relation of filialness, it does not follow that we shall miss chastisement. We must receive this. This is implied in the words of Paul, which follow the words just quoted: "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together." When we have become sons, we are not out of the sphere of chastisement. Since we are heirs to such an unimagined glory, there is needed much discipline and culture to fit us for it. Being sons of God,

there is so much for us that there must be sculpture and trial to prepare us for what is to come.

But chastisement is never the sign of God's displeasure, though punishment is. Chastisement is ever the expression of God's love.

I have gone into the house of a Christian where there had come a great sorrow; perhaps a child had fallen from the crib into the coffin. And the mother would say: "What sin have I committed that God should punish me so?" God has not punished her at all. He has chastened her, in order that thus she may become fitted for the magnificence of the inheritance.

In Hebrews, chapter 12, we read: "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" It is that the father may get the son ready for what the father intends for him. If we can think of this, it will take the pain out of the chastisement. Let us transmute our trouble into trial.

I cannot say,
Beneath the pressure of life's cares to-day,
I joy in these;
But I can say
That I had rather walk this rugged way,
If him it please.

I cannot feel
That all is well when dark'ning clouds conceal
The shining sun;
But then I know
God lives and loves, and say, since it is so,
"Thy will be done."

I cannot speak
In happy tones; the teardrops on my cheeks
Show I am sad;
But I can speak
Of grace to suffer with submission meek,
Until made glad.

I do not see
Why God should e'er permit some things to be,
When he is love;
But I can see,
Though often dimly, through the mystery,
His hand above.

I may not try
To keep the hot tears back; but hush that sigh,
"It might have been";
And try to still
Each rising murmur, and to God's sweet will
Respond—AMEN.

Realizing that chastisement does not mean wrath to us, we can sing, as we often do:

Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.

Let us ever glory in our sonship.

## XX.

## THE CUP OF SALVATION.

"I WILL take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

You best serve the Lord by receiving all he gives you, not by hard penance. If my boy should come to me and say, "Papa, how can I serve you?" I should say, "Be as good a boy as you can; learn your lessons as thoroughly as you can; get the most out of what I can give you; enjoy it the most you can."

This is precisely what God says to us. He says, "I have given you benefits; repay me by taking the cup of my salvation; by becoming the utmost Christian you can; by using as perfectly as you can the benefits offered by Jesus Christ." I am sure this is the true way in which we shall serve God.

Just think a moment what this cup of salvation involves. The Psalmist did not begin to

know as much of God as we know. You will remember that the Psalmist's Bible was but a meagre one at the best: only the Pentateuch, and a few of the historical books. He knew nothing about the Atonement except as faintly hinted to him there. Surely, the cup of salvation meant to him far less than it might mean to you or me, since there is given to us an added revelation through Christ and through the Holy Spirit. And we serve the Lord the most when we get the most out of our religion that we can.

This cup of salvation involves the real union between the Lord Jesus Christ and every one who trusts him. This is the fundamental truth of Christianity. When we give ourselves to Jesus Christ, we become one with him, in a way different from God's usual presence and providence; in a way deeper than by his sympathy with us, or by his association with us; it is a union formed by the Holy Spirit. Not that the soul in any wise loses its personality; but because it keeps its personality by its union with Jesus Christ, it is so interpenetrated and energized by the Spirit of Christ as to be made one with him,

as to be made a member of that believing, justified humanity, of which Christ is the Head. So we become one with him in an organic, real sense, which we cannot explain. This union is constantly insisted upon in the Scriptures, and is illustrated to us by many figures; as, for instance, by the foundation stone of the building: or by the figure of husband and wife. They are one —the believer and the Lord—as wife and husband are one. Also by the figure of the branch and the vine. Just as there must be the closest union, a union profoundly beyond our comprehension, so real and so intimate is the union between the Lord and those who trust him.

The Lord dwells in believers. He is God within us. He deigns to make our hearts his habitation. The old Shekinah which shone in the Tabernacle and the Temple could only be seen when the curtain was parted for a moment as the high priest went in once a year to the Most Holy Place. But that Shekinah which is an illustration of the divine presence is now in the hearts of all Christians. Jesus dwells in us; mighty truth and marvelous! Yet there is no

truth in the Scripture revealed more clearly. You are in vital union with our Lord Jesus Christ; so is every one that trusts in him. No figure of which you can conceive can fully set forth the intimacy of this union. It is a most vital indwelling of the Lord with you; you are so interpenetrated and energized by him, that you are really one with him, a member of that regenerated humanity of which he is the Head.

The cup of salvation, in the Christian sense, involves the fact of this deep and lasting union between the soul and the soul's Redeemer. Now, since this is the great element in the cup of salvation, that I am one with Jesus Christ, then I am perfectly safe; no real disaster can come to me. No man is drowned, though his feet be under water, while his head is above. And if you are one with the Lord Jesus Christ, your head is above all the billows, and you will not, you cannot be overcome. The old hymn is true—

> "Since he in heaven has fixed his throne,
> He'll fix his members there."

Well, then, this intimate union of the believer

with the Lord results to the believer in a restfulness in this knowledge.

A Southern gentleman said, that when he was a boy in Virginia at school, he was much indebted to a man who was a true teacher; who gloried in his duty, as all true teachers do. Dr. Arnold said: "Do not take your work as a dose, and you will not find it nauseous." There came to the school a poor, little, dull, brown specimen of the "white trash" in the days of slavery. With almost infinite difficulty, the teacher taught her her lessons, until at last she had learned letter by letter, and then formed syllable by syllable, and, finally, she could read. One day later, her brother came to the school, barefooted, his clothes held up by a single suspender. When the little fellow came in, the teacher, with his longing to do good, called him to him, and, opening Webster's spelling book, said: "What's that?" He answered, "A." "Well done!" and the teacher pointed to the next; "B." And the teacher still pointed on. When he came to D, the little fellow's head dropped, and he waited, and then he flung his

head up again, full of a certain pride, and said: "I don't know that letter, but my sister Lizzie does; it is all in the family." Well, I am a very ignorant member of Christ's family. It is very little that I know, and it is very little that most of us know; but the knowledge is in the family; the Elder Brother knows. He knows, with whom we are indissolubly united.

This fact that we are one with Jesus Christ involves the certainty of chastisement. I am a member of the body. My hand is a member of my body. Then, be sure I shall take care of my hand, because it is precious to me; and I shall do nothing to my hand that will injure it. All my interest is to cause the hand to suffer only so much, that out of the suffering the best good can come.

Well, I am some part of the regenerated body,—that is, of the Lord's body,—for I belong to him, and I am absolutely certain that whatever may come to me will be according to his knowledge and according to his love. Now, then, the fact that I am one with the Lord Jesus ought to be a reason for great joy. What an honor it is!

What a safety it is! Why should I be like a bulrush, smitten with the wind? Why should I not have a sense of the dignity of what I am, a Christian, in indissoluble union with the Lord Christ.

To take the cup of his salvation is just to get the good out of his benefits; to take them, and to recognize what it means to be taking what God loves to give. I have not to take up any penances, only to accept God's generosity. And the better I drink of it, the better I serve him.

There is just one other thing: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people;" for I am not ashamed that I belong to him, and am willing to have it known that I am one of his. If you take the cup of salvation, it will be easy to serve, because your heart will be full of joy. The best return you can possibly make to the Lord is to enjoy everything to the utmost, and to be the best Christian possible.

I remember the red-letter days in my boyhood, when I was at home in Cleveland. Father was a young lawyer and was immensely busy, and

could only take a little time now and then with his family. One of the excursions we used to take was delightful, and the memory of it is a perpetual pleasure. They used to bring around the rockaway, and we stowed in all sorts of baggage, and all sorts of things to eat; and through the long forests (not then cut down) we used to drive for days to a place miles and miles away, where some relations lived. And I remember how pleased father was when he saw the children enjoying everything, when they got out and walked for the sake of walking; and when they enjoyed the birds, and when they liked the sandwiches which were so delicious, he would say, a smile meanwhile lighting up his countenance, "Why, I am happy just to see you enjoy it all."

The Lord feels just that way. The more we enjoy, and the more we take of what he wants to give us, the more our brightness flashes back brightness even upon his face.

Let these two principles be ever before you: First, drink all you can, and second, let it be known that you are the Lord's.

"Casting all your care upon him,
For he careth"—words how sweet!
How the Infinite and finite
In this sacred sentence meet!

How each word, alone, the spirit
Cheers and comforts; how the whole,
Like a loving benediction,
Soothes the sorrow of the soul!

Casting—like some long-borne burden,
From the shoulders thrown at last,
We, the care, grown, oh! so heavy,
On our Lord may wholly cast.

Casting all—oh, gracious fullness,
Slight as well as gravest care;
None too small for him to notice,
None too great for him to bear.

Casting all your care—ah, tender,
Thoughtful "your" then it must be
That his care for us is special,
Personal for you and me.

Casting all your care upon him;
Doubts and dreads and anxious fears,
All that weighs the heart with sadness,
All that dims the eyes with tears.

Casting all your care upon him,
For he careth, he doth heed;
Every want and woe foreseeth,
Will not fail us in our need.

Careth for us—oh, how precious
Is the care of earthly friend!
But the watch-care of a mother
Doth our Father's care transcend.

Careth for us—oh, then, brother,
Let us care so wondrous prove;
From our hearts let us, believing,
All anxiety remove!

Cast it on the Lord and leave it,
Trust his word so sweet and blest,
And our hearts, before so burdened,
Shall in peace surpassing rest.

# XXI.

## HOLDEN EYES.

I SUPPOSE it is altogether impossible for us t know at all what must have been the surprise of the resurrection to the disciples. I remembe to have read some time since of one whose deares friend was in the war; in the list of the kille and wounded, his name was once found; he wa given up entirely for lost. One day, ever s many months after, there was a wonted ste upon the porch and a wonted knock against th door; and one to whom he had been very dea went out to find him alive whom she suppose dead—wounded, indeed, and with an empt sleeve, but still alive. I suppose some suc incident as that is necessary, in order to mak real to us what must have been the absolut surprise of the resurrection to the disciples. Ye these disciples going to Emmaus had not ye entered into this joyful surprise. Our Lor

had risen, but they did not know it; their hope was utterly dead. It was the constant and steady feeling of the disciples before the crucifixion that our Lord could never die. They had seen how he had called Lazarus forth out of the grave after he had been four days a prisoner; they had seen how he had raised the daughter of Jairus; they had seen the only son of the widow of Nain start forth into life; they had seen all sorts of wonderful things dropping from the benignant hand of the Lord Jesus Christ; and when he prophesied of the necessity of his death, they thought his meaning was that he might be apprehended and come into severe clashing with the authorities, but that yet in the crisis he would deliver himself, and that death never would smite him. When they at last saw that death was certain, when they saw his heart's blood spilled out on the green, rich earth at the foot of the cross, their hopes died too. And when he was carried to the tomb, dead as any one ever was—in that tomb their hopes were buried.

These two disciples, after the tragedy, are

going to Emmaus, which was a little village about eight or nine miles away from Jerusalem. Their attachment to Jesus was now broken, the tragedy was ended, and there was nothing for them; they might cherish him as a memory, but he could never be any more than a dead friend; and so, very probably, they were going back to their old home, to their usual occupation. While they were going, Jesus himself draws near, and begins to converse with them; but their eyes were holden.

That was their trouble, holden eyes. I am sure it is a trouble still; it is quite a chronic trouble with most of us. If our eyes were not holden, we should be much braver, and more triumphant than we are. How much grace may we have? We have just as much grace as we will receive; there is not a limit to God's giving, but there is in our receiving. God's grace is like the light pressing around this building; we may have as much as we will have; we may open the windows and clean off the blurs, or we may draw the shades down, and so only have a subdued light. So God's grace is pressing around

every one, and we have as much of its holy peace and joy as we will to have. There is no reason in God why we should not be constantly and steadily on the mountain; there is no reason in God why we should not have the peace of God which passeth understanding in our hearts. We have occasional glimpses; but it ought to be constant; it is not for some particular time, it is not simply for the time when we are worshiping, but for the time when we are working, for all time. We may have just as much of God's grace as we will have, and the reason we do not have more is because we do not care to have it. There are some things we are not willing to give up; we are not quite willing for Christ to take up entire and cleansing residence within us; we do not clean away the blurred spots of wrong thinking and wrong doing, and so enable our souls clearly to receive the Light, and so our eyes are holden, and we do not see the great and precious grace that God has given us. Some of the reasons for holden eyes stand out in this narrative. As I have thought of them, they seem to be practical reasons to every one of us.

1. Because we do not know enough of the Scripture; we do not study it enough. That was one reason why the eyes of the disciples going to Emmaus were holden. They had a part of the Scriptures; they had the Old Testament prophecies, and in them it was constantly foretold that the Lord was to come and die and rise again; either they had not studied the prophecies sufficiently, or they failed to comprehend their teaching. I am sure that it is a constant trouble with us. It would be quite surprising if those of us who study the Bible should ask ourselves how much we really study it; the amount of time as compared with the amount of time given to pleasure, to intercourse, to society, to the newspaper, we should find it to be surprisingly small. It would be well for us to read the Bible through; that would not be such a tremendous and terrible amount of reading to undertake. It would be well for us to read the gospels through, asking ourselves certain questions: What do the gospels tell me concerning this, or this, or this? I know a very true and sweet and strong saint of God, who reads her

Bible in this fashion. She wants to know what the Scripture says about faith, and she will read the New Testament through, marking the passages that touch on this subject. After this is done, you may collate them and study them. You can find it all done in books, but it is a great deal better to do it for yourself. What a help if we should study with this thought in mind, to find out what in them our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that he will be to every one of us. Did you ever read the gospels with that idea, and then find yourself surprised, and your eyes opened, and your heart flooded with joy when he tells you what he is?—how he is bread, water, shepherd, door; how he is vine to you, how he is rock to you, how he is light to you, how he is leader to you? Do you suppose, if you read the Scripture in that fashion and were on the hunt for knowing what the Lord had told you he would be to you, your eyes would be as holden?

Some one came to me in great distress; she had great trouble; her light was gone; she had come into the darkness, and she was looking

within herself and sighing and wondering, Why am I thus and thus? I said, "I wish you would do what I want you to. Take the New Testament and read the gospels with the question in your mind, What does Christ tell me he is to me? When you have read them through and marked them, look them over and over and fasten them in your thought. I saw her a few weeks afterward, and the old light of peace was on her face.

Read the epistles, in order to understand the theological relation of the facts of Jesus Christ to ourselves. We can understand in the epistles the method of the atonement; we can understand why it was necessary that Christ should suffer, and what comes to us because of his atonement. As, for instance, the great peace that is written of in the eighth chapter of Romans: "There is therefore now no condemnation." And then we find in the same chapter of Romans how there is adoption for us; how we are not simply forgiven, but are put into the place of sons, and stand in that relation to God, so that we, even though our lips are sin-stained, may cry, "Abba, Father!"

By a determined looking into the Scripture in this way you will find wonderful help.

2. Another reason suggested by this narrative, why our eyes are sometimes holden, is because we are in great sorrow. That was the trouble with these disciples; the utmost sorrow had come to them. They had been in passionate devotion to their Lord; all their hopes were centred in him, and now he was slain and buried, and that they no doubt thought was the end of it. I do not think it very wonderful that their eyes should be holden with sorrow, because they did not know of the resurrection. It is wonderful that sorrow should make your eye and mine holden, when we know that our Lord Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and that all power in heaven and earth is in his hands.

There is a story that, at the southern extremity of Africa, there thrusts itself out a cape, and it was supposed for many a century that men could not sail around it. Those who had rounded it were always lost in the waters swirling around it. The name of the cape was the Cape of Storms. A certain Portuguese determined to vanquish the

Cape, and he sailed resolutely around it, and so he paved the way for his countrymen to the far Cathay, and made a passage to the East Indies, and instead of naming it the "Cape of Storms," it was henceforth called the "Cape of Good Hope." Now into your life and mine has been thrust that Cape of Storms which we call death; we do not know anything about it, and the question is, "Is there any light?" Men have tried to answer that question, and could not. But our Lord Jesus Christ has rounded that cape, and he tells us that there is light and life on the other side. He has brought life and immortality to light, and to the Christian the Cape of Storms is changed into the Cape of Good Hope. It was not so wonderful that sorrow blinded the eyes of these disciples toward him; but since we know that we have a living, helping, and guiding Saviour, it is wonderful that sorrow should so often blind our eyes to Jesus Christ.

There is only one way of treating sorrow; and that way is to make a fence by which we shall not be shut away from Christ, but shall be shut up to Christ. We ought to treat it just as Paul

and Silas treated that prison in Philippi. They were thrust into the inner prison, and the iron doors grated against them; but when that iron door closed, shutting them in, it did not shut them away from Christ, but it shut Christ in with them; and thus in that darkness their eyes were not holden; for they saw Christ, and in the midnight there were songs in their hearts and praises on their lips. There is great danger that when a trouble comes we allow it to get between us and the Lord; what we want to do is to so use it that it shall force us closer to the Lord, and thus we shall see the Lord amid the sorrow. That is the Christian way of treating sorrow; there is no other proper way.

When a great trouble or a less trouble comes, and you find yourself wondering, "Why should a thing like this happen to me?" do not let your faith fail in the Lord Jesus Christ. It shall be with you as it was with one who sings about it:

Speechless Sorrow sat with me;
I was sighing wearily;
Lamp and fire were out; the rain
Wildly beat the window pane.

In the dark we heard a knock;
And the hand was on the lock.
One in waiting spake to me,
  Saying sweetly,
"I am come to sup with thee!"

All my room was dark and damp;
"Sorrow!" said I, "trim the lamp,
Light the fire, and cheer thy face;
Set the guest chair in its place."
And again I heard the knock;
In the dark I found the lock.
"Enter! I have turned the key!
  Enter, stranger!
Who art come to sup with me."

Opening wide the door, he came;
But I could not speak his name;
In the guest chair took his place;
But I could not see his face!
When my cheerful fire was beaming,
When my little lamp was gleaming,
And the feast was spread for thee,
  Lo! my Master
Was the guest that supped with me!

3. Another reason suggested by this narrative why our eyes are sometimes holden is because we refuse to recognize Christ in our circumstances. It was so with these disciples going to Emmaus; Jesus himself was with them; they did not know

it, yet he was there. It is just as true that he is with you and me in all our circumstances. Our Lord Christ has a hand in our circumstances; things do not fall to us from mere chance, but they are given because he sees that this is the best for us. We need to recognize that fact, in order to see him on the road with us—with us because we are walking the road where he goes, because that road is of his appointment.

Nothing struck me more when I was in personal contact with Mr. Spurgeon some time ago, than the way in which he spontaneously and constantly recognized Christ in everything that came to him. The sunshine was beautiful, because Christ sent it; the chance for a little outing that he was taking with me was good, because Christ had given it to him; and the duty. Christ had assigned it, and therefore it was done; and the burden, Christ had appointed it, and therefore it was to be borne. When I came away, I felt as though I had been in a temple worshiping, because his constant speech was about the Lord, and he seemed to know that everything which came to him was from the Lord's hand. His

eyes were not holden, because he saw the Lord in his circumstances.

Here is a little snatch my mother has often repeated to me:

Just to trust, and yet to ask
  Guidance still;
Take the training or the task
  As he will;
Just to take the loss or gain
  As he sends it;
Just to take the joy or pain
  As he lends it.
He who formed thee for his praise
  Will not miss his gracious aim;
So to-day and all thy days
  Shall be moulded for the same.

Just to leave in his dear hand
  Little things;
All we cannot understand,
  All that stings;
Just to let him take the care,
  Sorely pressing.
Finding all we let him bear
  Changed to blessing.
This is all! and yet the way
  Marked by him who loved thee best,
Secret of a happy day,
  Secret of his promised rest.

When we thus recognize Christ in our circumstances, our eyes will not be holden. Let us refuse to have such holden eyes; it is possible to have eyes shining, eyes that do behold our Lord, by a more thorough study of his word, by a right treatment of sorrow, and by a reverent yet joyful recognition of him in our circumstances. So he will walk along the way with us just as he walked with the disciples going to Emmaus. We shall find our eyes clear; we shall have the joy and peace that came to those disciples when at last Jesus made himself known in the breaking of the bread. So let our talk this afternoon end with this prayer:

Out of myself, dear Lord,
Oh, lift me up!
No more I trust myself in life's dim maze,
Sufficient to myself, in all its devious ways;
I trust no more, but humbly at thy throne
Pray "Lead me, for I cannot go alone."

Out of my weary self,
Oh, lift me up!
I faint; the road winds upward all the way;
Each night but ends another weary day.
Give me thy strength, and may I be so blest,
As on "the heights" I find the longed-for rest.

Out of my selfish self,
Oh, lift me up!
To live for others, and, in living so,
To bear a blessing wheresoe'er I go;
To give the sunshine, and the clouds conceal,
Or let them but the silver clouds reveal.

Out of my lonely self,
Oh, lift me up!
Though other hearts with love are running o'er,
Though dear ones fill my lonely home no more,
Though every day I miss the fond caress,
Help me to join in others' happiness.

Out of my doubting self,
Oh, lift me up!
Help me to feel that thou art always near,
E'en though 'tis night, and all around seems drear;
Help me to know that, though I cannot see,
It is my Father's hand that leadeth me.

## XXII.

## THE KINGDOM COMING WITH POWER.

ON one occasion, after our Lord had been setting forth to some of his followers the terms of discipleship, he said (Mark 9 : 1): "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." That prophecy was fulfilled. The coming of God's kingdom with power meant the resurrection of our Lord and all that came from the resurrection, especially the bestowment of the Holy Spirit. And many lived to see that day.

But there is also a very real meaning of this prophecy to you and to me; namely: That our Lord's religion is not merely something to help us in the future, after we are dead. It is that; but it is also to be for us now, in this present life, a strength and an illumination.

Our Christian modes of thought often fail here. We think too much of going to heaven. We make too much of heaven, too much of it as a place, and not a state. Going to heaven is the fringe of being a Christian, not the thing itself. Palms, robes, golden gates, are the accidents of heaven. The real thing is purity of heart, satisfaction in the likeness of Christ, being in the presence of, and enjoying communion with, God. And with these come all the incidents that belong to them.

Precisely as we think too much of heaven in the external sense, so we may think too much of getting there. What we should think of is the heavenly mind which we may have here, and all that belongs to the heavenly mind. We are not to relegate to the future what Christ can do for us here. We may hear Christ saying to us, in a very real sense, "There be some standing here, that shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." In the present life, there is divine power and help.

What is there *now* for us in Christianity—at least in a seminal way?

1. *One thing is the constant feeling of a Christ alive.* We do not make enough of our Lord's resurrection. Think of the difference between Christ and every other being on our earth. I stood in the crypt under St. Paul's, before the tomb of Wellington. But he was not there, was not in the world. Only the ashes were left. His influence was in the world as a memory; but his personal presence was not there, nor in London, nor in England. In Paris, I stood under the gilded dome, and looked on the sarcophagus of his antagonist, the great Napoleon. Everywhere were the memorials of Napoleon. There were the tattered flags that had gone waving on to victory; the names of his battles were inscribed in mosaic upon the pavement; and there were some tottering soldiers who had in their day followed him. But he was not there.

For all the great, and for all who have lived, death has been a victor. How can a victory be greater than that which death now wields? I have just come from a funeral. I saw the dead form of a wife, a mother, in her coffin. I laid her in the grave which, on such a day as this, seems

so awfully cold. What victory can be more complete?

But our Lord, in tasting death, vanquished death. We get help by his cross and by his resurrection. We think too much of the cross, and not enough of the fact that he opened the gates of heaven to all believers. Nothing has so helped me as the consideration that my Christ is not a dead Christ. Nothing has so emphasized to me the might and majesty of his religion as the fact that he is death's Master—that he has shattered death's sceptre.

2. *We may have the constant and real ministry of the Holy Spirit.* There is for each of us a present Christ. The fault I find with the premillennial doctrine is, that Christ is to come in a physical form, and to reign on a material local throne. How much better is the Dispensation of the Spirit! I may have a spiritual Christ wherever I am, in sickness, in sorrow, in the flame. I am nearer to Christ than John was, even when he lay on Christ's bosom. Christ by the Holy Spirit comes into contact with my spirit—dwells in me. He is not reigning in Jerusalem. If he

were, it would take me four weeks to get to him. But through the Spirit, I have a Christ here. You have, through the Spirit, a Christ with you in your housekeeping; in your care of the children; everywhere. What more divine disclosure can there be than this? We have, through the Holy Spirit, a Christ present with us. The old Shekinah was but in one place; the new Shekinah shines everywhere, in every heart.

Read the epistles, and see what weight is laid on this fact: "Ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit." What truth can more subdue and sanctify us than this, that we have in us this divine resident? The Holy Spirit is here, not there. Now, not then.

3. *And there may come to us a mighty motive.* Have you read the "Life of Sister Dora"? If you have not, I hope you will; I do not know a more stimulating book. She devoted herself to doing good in the way of nursing. Her motive was Christ, for Christ's sake. Because she had this motive, she could do what she did. She endured labor without weariness; she went through the most repulsive scenes without dis-

gust ; she mingled with the coarse navvies, many of whom were her patients, without repugnance. She nourished her great soul, which ran out in great deeds, on Christ.

It is the motive which God looks at, and which makes the deed. When I am asking myself how I can live truly, how I can live a noble life, nothing so helps me as the fact that I may have Christ as my motive. So long as I have that motive, the expression of the motive may be mean ; but in the Lord's eyes, even the poorest work glows with a celestial light.

4. *We have also communion.* The most real thing to a Christian ought to be the consciousness of the moments when he touches God. I cannot set this forth in language. As the heart knoweth its own bitterness, so it alone can know its own joy. There is no joy so deep as when we feel that we talk with God and God with us. This ought to be our usual experience.

One Christian woman used to set aside an hour which she called "the Master's hour." She would open her Bible, and would ask God to shine on it ; she would hold her heart open

before God, feeling that God knew and cared and directed. Each of us ought to have a Master's hour. Have you such an hour, a time when you go by yourself, and open yourself to God? Do you know the great strength that comes out of it? Our Lord had such an hour. Out of such communion came the Transfiguration. Out of it came (speaking on the human side) the wisdom to choose the twelve; the power to endure in Gethsemane. All this communion is for you and me now.

5. *There is also for us a conscious joy.* There is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is that which comes to us by *hap*, which happens to us from without. Joy is an internal spring. Christ does not promise happiness; he does not say that all without shall be smiling, that there shall be no sorrow in the Christian's life. But he tells us that we shall have joy within us; that whatever may be without us, within there shall be a source of delight, the comfort of the Holy Spirit. This joy, this comfort within us masters the outward circumstances.

All this we may have now and here. We

often quote those words of Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," as if they referred to heaven; but they do not refer to heaven at all; they mean now: "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

Some traveler reports that he found in Africa a tribe who, in the midst of plenty, were starving. The reason was that the lion had not killed anything lately. These people were accustomed to follow the lordly lion, and to eat what he had killed and left. And so they had lost the habit and power of pursuing and taking anything for themselves. Many Christians are like these degraded savages. There is plenty all about, but they do not take it, because they cannot; and they cannot, because they would not.

Recently, a man told me the story of his escape from Andersonville; for days and days, he made his painful way, till at last he saw afar the Union flag; it meant to him all that was high and noble; but he was still within the lines of the enemy; the people about him did not see that

in it; it was his secret. We are among the worldly; but we may know the secret of the Lord. All this is for us, not yonder, but here and now. Religion is not merely something to get to heaven by; it is something to live by now. "Verily, I say unto you, that there be some standing here that shall not taste of death till they shall see the kingdom of God come with power."

## XXIII.

## HOW TO TRIUMPH OVER EVIL.

I WILL ask you, this afternoon, to consider especially the lesson found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians 5 : 8 : "For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord : walk as children of light."

The principle involved here is important and healthful. There are some persons who say that the world is getting worse and sinking to destruction ; that the work of Christ is practically a failure. I cannot see how any one with faith in Christ, or knowledge of history, can hold this view. Take, for example, this evil of intemperance ; many persons think that we are worse off than we were : I do not think so. In the Autobiography of Dr. Goodell, prefixed to his Life, he tells us that seventy or eighty years ago a very godly minister used to pass his father's door and often stopped in to see the family. Once the

minister chanced to meet there the family physician, and he asked his advice. He said: "I am about visiting the sick and the afflicted and the inquiring, and everywhere I am asked to take something to drink. I cannot decline without giving mortal offense; but after a while I find myself growing dizzy, and I am afraid that I shall say or do something to disgrace myself. Now, what do you advise me to do about this?" The physician, after considering the matter very carefully, said: "You had better, when you find yourself growing a little dizzy, go home while you are able to walk; then sit down in your study until you feel that the effect has passed by; and then start out again on the calls." The thought of abstaining never occurred to either of them; the only thing was to drink without showing the effect of it. Everybody drank, and all seemed on the way to ruin. Things are going on better. No minister now, who went about among his people, drinking something here and there, could long continue a minister.

This great evil prevailed in Ephesus. How was it to be overcome? One way is the way of

negation and restriction. There was much apparent training in the form of "Don't." There is much of this training now. We say to our children: "Don't," "*Don't*," "DON'T"; and the boys and girls do not like to stay at home, because they have had an avalanche of "Don't." The way of good resolutions was another way to triumph over sin; but it was a dull, tasking way. Paul's way was different. This is his way: Get into yourself a better mind, so that you shall not want to do anything low or degrading.

Now, I suppose that no one here is subject to this form of sin; but the principle set forth is very helpful to us all.

I suppose there are, perhaps, no persons more degraded—at any rate, I have seen none more degraded—than some of our North American Indians: dirty, lazy, crowded into their miserable tipis. Now, if one of them wants to rise, he may resolve to do so; but it will be very hard while he is in these surroundings. But I have seen at Carlisle the young Indians who had thrown off the savage. When you see them you say: "We have struck it at last; we have found

how to change the Indian." We take the children of the leading Indians, and put into them a better mind, then send them back to their people to become centers of a better civilization.

Here is a young artist who desires to fight against ugliness. Shall he do it by resolutions? No. Let him go and study beauty; let him wait before great artists. His mind being filled with these, all that is ugly will be driven out. This is the principle of the Scriptures. The principle is: Be so filled with the better that you will not want to be overcome by the worse.

Let us turn to the list of the fruits of the Spirit, as given in Galatians 5: 22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Look at these fruits. Take peace: this means, as Miss Waring says,

"A heart at leisure from itself."

It means freedom from torturing anxiety.

You say: "I have not this peace; I am anxious. It is my nature to borrow trouble; I cross bridges before I come to them; I long for this fruit of the Spirit." So you gather up your

powers when some trouble is coming, and you say: "I will not be anxious; I will cast all on God"; but you do not get peace.

Take the other fruits. Take meekness and temperance, or patient self-control—self-control such that you are serene and sweet in your household, so that you bring light wherever you are. You say: "The children bother me. My Sunday-school class bothers me; I think I shall give it up." "Now," you say, "I am going to withstand the next temptation to impatience"; but the next time the temptation comes you are carried away before it.

Take again, faith; which means, perhaps, fidelity. You say: "I know that I ought to show fidelity in great things and in small, and I will do so"; but soon you say that you have failed.

Now, this is not Paul's way. His way is: Get such a sense of God's presence that the natural fruit of it shall be peace, patience, self-control, and fidelity.

But how may I be filled with the Spirit? It is the glory of the Christian life that this may be, if we really want it so; we may so have this

better mind that we shall not want to do anything evil, and thus shall be triumphant over the evil.

We must believe in the Holy Spirit. Here is life for you in place of death; and strength for you in place of weakness; and holiness for you in place of sin. What you need is to know these things that you may act on them.

Study the New Testament that you may know what God will do for you through the Holy Spirit. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit for peace and strength? The reason we are so weak is that we are so ignorant of what God has done for us in himself.

Let us know that the Spirit is near us, ready to enter our hearts. It is a wrong prayer that we sometimes offer, that the Holy Ghost may come down upon us, as if he were not near us, and ready to enter and fill our hearts always. If you would be filled with the Holy Spirit, kneel down and put away all that is evil, and consecrate yourself to him.

Pray for the Holy Spirit. Pray that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit. There are some

prayers in regard to which we have to say, "If it be thy will"; but we know that it is God's will that we should be filled with the Spirit. Act on the Holy Spirit. Reckon on his strength.

The children of Israel ventured on the word of God when they went into the Jordan. The river was full up to the banks until the very moment when the priests dipped their feet in the flood; then the waters stood still. We must depend on the promised Spirit. Act on the promises. Get yourself so filled with the Spirit that you shall not want to do what is not God's will.

Gracious Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would gracious be,
And with words that help and heal,
Would thy life in mine reveal,
And with actions bold and meek,
Would for Christ, my Saviour, speak.

Truthful Spirit, dwell in me;
I myself would truthful be,
And with wisdom kind and clear
Let thy life in mine appear,
And with actions brotherly
Speak my Lord's sincerity.

Mighty Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would mighty be,
Mighty so as to prevail
Where unaided man must fail,
Ever by a mighty hope
Pressing on and bearing up.

Holy Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would holy be;
Separate from sin, I would
Choose and cherish all things good,
And whatever I can be
Give to him, who gave me thee.

Dear friends, all this is true. If we believed it more, it were better for us. We may have the fruits of the Spirit, peace, love, joy, temperance, meekness, if we will but believe toward the Spirit, pray toward the Spirit, act toward the Spirit.

This is the way to overcome; and may every one of us live as never before, so that the Spirit may fill us for Jesus' sake!

## XXIV.

## THE TOMB OF JESUS.

I KNOW of no thought that can so rob death of its terrors and make it even pleasant, as this fact, that he who is our Elder Brother has been through it before us. We must all go through an unknown country, by paths on whose sides mysteries stand thickly; but when we think of the tomb of Jesus, and think that he, our Elder Brother, has been there before us, we need not fear. What a complete and entire share he has with us in our nature and in our destiny! Jesus has been there; and it is quite impossible that death should lead me anywhere where Jesus has not been. It is quite natural to shrink from death. People are much mistaken in thinking that one cannot be a Christian, and yet not want to die just now. "Dying grace is for dying times"; but when we think of the change, how comforting that "Jesus has lain there"!

1. The tomb of Jesus teaches us the certainty of the divine love for us. This is a lesson that we need to learn constantly, for so many things seem to clash with the idea of the love of God. On some beautiful April day, when the crocuses are beginning to open their yellow petals, and we know that we are in the vestibule of the spring, we are glad that the long, hard winter is behind us, and we can see evidences of the divine love. But it was very hard to see evidences of the divine love in the blizzard, when the ministries of love must stop, because the people could not perform them. How may I, in all vicissitudes, be absolutely sure that God loves? There came to me once a very wonderful and real experience which helps me now when I do pastoral work and get into hard places where people fight the wolf from the door, yet barely do it, plying the needle every day. In Edinburgh, where the houses are built so close together that if you stand in the little alley between you can touch the houses on either side, and where they are piled up twelve stories high, and each story crammed with human beings, living in filth and

squalor and disease, I once made an exploration. It was the most terrible day I ever spent; it seemed to me as if all my faith were gone, and if any one had told me God loves people, I believe I should have felt like pointing at the people and saying: "Does that look like love?" While going on thinking about these things, I heard the scrape of a fiddle, not the playing of a fiddle; and I turned and saw a little boy, his clothes neatly patched, though well worn out, and his shoes neatly blacked—at least his one shoe, for he had but one leg. I gave him a silver piece, and he looked as if he had never seen a silver piece before. His appearance told of a mother in those dark rooms trying to make her boy decent. And I thought: "If God loves men and women, how can he stand a thing like this? This child has to fight through life with the disadvantage of one leg." And as I questioned, I saw a vision of Jesus Christ on the cross. I am not given to visions, but I saw one then. I saw the head drop and I heard a voice as plainly as ever I heard a voice, "The heart of God has broken." And from that vision I rose into a kind of jubi-

lance of faith, and I said: "God does love men, because Jesus Christ went down into death for them."

2. The tomb of Jesus teaches us the value of merely passive service. Milton sang, "They also serve who only stand and wait." Sometimes I think it would be well if you, in this church, would only not keep me waiting so long for this thing and that thing! It is the waiting side of the pastor's work which is the tough side; it is not the serving side. It is a very blessed lesson, then, of the tomb of Jesus, that the best way is sometimes simply to "stand and wait." Christ, when he died, served best by passivity, and he did more good than he could have done by activity missing the passivity. Do not let waiting merge, however, into laziness; it is simply when you cannot do, that you may remember that "they also serve who only stand and wait."

3. This tomb of Jesus teaches us that what is in the tomb is not ourselves; it is only our bodies. I have been saying, "Jesus lay there," but that is not true; he did not lie there. You know he said to the thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me

in paradise"; and that day was Friday, and on that day Jesus and the thief were together in paradise. Now, I suppose that is the way it will be with us; when we die, and the great change passes over us, we shall go into paradise. But what is paradise? We do not know; we only know that it is being with Christ, if we love him, and that it is a state of absolute blessedness. We know it is not the complete heaven, because there will not be a complete heaven until the resurrection; but we ourselves shall be after death where Jesus went, and paradise until the resurrection will be heaven; we shall be with the Lord, and in rest complete. We shall be in companionship with one another, for Jesus was in companionship with others. The tomb holds only the body; it does not hold us. I do not have to lie in the tomb any more than Jesus had to lie there; the body is only my house. I wish we could talk more according to the truth of things; we do not bury people; we bury bodies. You say you have lost a child. Oh, no! you have not lost a child; the child is in paradise. Jesus was not in the tomb; only his body was there.

4. That tomb teaches us that we cannot wait very long by it without going on into the thought of that tomb empty. As we wait by it, we cannot help seeing the light of the resurrection falling upon it, and the absolute annihilation of death. "He showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river was there the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." "And there shall be no more death." The crowning thought of this world is death, for death is the inevitable certainty. For husband and wife there is always the harrowing fear that one shall be taken and the other left. We are haunted here all the time by the certainty of death. But there is another world, and the crowning thought of that world is life—"the river of the water of life." For, see, our Lord Christ from paradise returns on the morning of the resurrection; the tomb is empty and death is utterly annihilated. You trust Jesus, and you can take up the apostle's challenge, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

5. There is just another thing that we must think of by the tomb of Jesus: Because there is an empty tomb, we have a living Christ. Suppose my father should write me, "My son, I have determined to-morrow to do this thing for you, and that thing for you, and the other thing for you," and I read the letter and say, "Father is very good and very kind." Don't you see that this promise of my father's is conditional upon his life. Suppose the day should come (and may God put far away that day!) and my father should have died; then he could never make his promise good. Christ's promise is conditioned upon his living; and all his promises are true, because he is the master of death, and because death cannot in any wise intrude or interfere. The pure, great kaiser, in a kind of delirium at last, is reported as saying: "If Russia threatens me, I will be true to my Austria"; but he died. But Jesus lives forevermore, and so we are absolutely sure of a living Christ as we wait here by the tomb of Jesus. This living Christ will take care of us; let us trust him.

Let us trust; do not be full of forebodings,

Let us often think of those women going to the tomb, on that morning, to make more sure, as love would have it, of the sepulchre of Jesus. And they said, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Yet they kept on going; and, as it always is, the stone was rolled away. Although the path may be black, yet he is alive, and he will send his angel to roll away the stone, if we go on in the service of faith.

That which weeping ones were saying
  Eighteen hundred years ago,
We, the same weak faith betraying,
  Say in our sad hours of woe.
Looking at some trouble lying
  In the dark and dread unknown,
We too often ask with sighing,
  "Who shall roll away the stone?"

Thus, with care our spirits crushing,
  When they might from care be free,
And, in joyous song outgushing,
  Rise in rapture, Lord, to thee.
For, before the day was ended,
  Oft we've had with joy to own
Angels have from heaven descended,
  And have rolled away the stone.

Many a storm-cloud sweeping o'er us
  Never pours on us its rain;
Many a grief we see before us
  Never comes to cause us pain.
Ofttimes, in the feared to-morrow,
  Sunshine comes—the cloud is flown;
Ask not, then, in foolish sorrow,
  "Who shall roll away the stone?"

Burden not thy soul with sadness;
  Make the wiser, better choice;
Drink the wine of life with gladness,
  God doth bid the man, "Rejoice!"
In to-day's bright sunlight basking,
  Leave to-morrow's cares alone;
Spoil not present joys by asking:
  "Who shall roll away the stone?"

# XXV.

## STRENGTH IN OUR SOUL.

THAT is very significant praise in the One Hundred and Thirty-eighth Psalm, which David offers to God, in these words: "In the day when I cried thou answerest me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." And I do not know of any gift that any of us need more than just this gift, "Strength in one's soul." We are frequently anxious for better and more shining circumstances; but the true need is not any change of circumstance, but change of inward self. We shall never in this world be surrounded by circumstances that precisely suit us; for, no matter in what position we may be, we can always suggest some improvement.

Ahab, looking out of his palace window, sees the little plot of ground which was Naboth's vineyard, and finds the lines of his grounds are crooked, because that vineyard is in the way;

and he is displeased. So it is with us all: whatever the prospect, there is some spot to mar; and this one defect seems so dark as to make us focus our gaze upon it, and forget the light. So what we need is not so much change of circumstance, as change of self. If we had such faith in God as David had, it would be a great thing for us. On the seashore, some summer day, we see frequently cast up by the waves a great mass of sea weed. It goes where the tide leaves it, and has no power of resistance; it is the mere sport of circumstances. But there, on the shore, we see, jutting out into the water, some huge rock, which, though battered by the waves never so much, is strong against the waves, because it has a certain power in itself. If the day be stormy. and the tempest be let loose, still that rock stands firm, the master of circumstances, because it has power within itself.

And we are true men and women in proportion as we are, instead of the subjects, the masters of circumstances. And we can never be that until we can, like David, say: "Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

Now, that aged monarch, lying dead there in Berlin to-day, is one of the most remarkable instances of a strong soul in this century. It is very interesting to look over the history of his life, and see how, his mother fleeing from Napoleon I., and their carriage breaking down, they sat by the roadside, and the mother sang to her children, then bade them go into the cornfield and pluck the little blue flowers which he, always after, had pictured in his room as long as he lived. I think you rarely ever find one so self-centered as he, and so much the master of circumstances. And at the last, as always follows, he found circumstances flowing to his touch, and he molded them to suit himself. He was master always, and not slave. Well, I think, surrounded by our circumstances, what we most need is not, perhaps, such strength of soul as that, but specially religious strength. And yet I believe the grand old kaiser had religious strength too; I believe he was a devout Christian.

We all need strength of soul, and we are miserably poor without it.

We need it in prosperity, though we are apt

to think otherwise. I have seen in many cases that, as the thermometer of social and worldly advantages rose higher, the thermometer of spiritual power sank down to zero. It is one of the saddest facts that God's goodness, instead of leading to repentance, so often leads to forgetfulness of him. A man does not think, perhaps, as his business is increasing, or a woman, as she finds herself cushioned in better circumstances, that now special strength is needed that the soul shall not lose its hold on God, and begin to trust itself. When this happens, the soul gets weaker and weaker still.

We need this strength in adversity, when we are under chastisement. Please remember a distinction I have often made here: the distinction between chastisement and punishment. We must not think, if we are really Jesus Christ's, that we are punished. God does not punish Christians, for Jesus Christ has been punished in their stead. Punishment is the infliction of penalty, and looks law-ward. Chastisement looks not law-ward, but culture-ward. We must have chastisement. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speak-

eth unto you as unto children: My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? . . . Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chasteneth us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Hebrews 12 : 5–10.)

So if we would be partakers of the divine holiness, we need chastisement. And we need strength of soul to endure it, remembering that it is a sign of God's love, and comes from his hand. And surely we shall need strength of soul in time of death. I have just come from the funeral of an aged sister, one of the sweetest souls. For a year past, she has been lying under the lingering shadows of disease as well as of age. She met death in one of the sweetest ways that

ever I saw a Christian meet it. When I asked her if she had any fear whatever, she said: "No; I want to go. I am only waiting for the summons." She said she had the most complete trust in Jesus Christ. Jesus had said he would take care of her, and that was enough. She went at last in the quietness of a beautiful sleep. Surely, when our time comes, we shall need strength in our souls.

Now, the question arises, how can we have this strength of soul? I am very sure we must make the old answer: "We get this inward strength by faith." Only let us be sure that we understand what faith means. It is believed that David wrote this psalm full of praise at the time when he had had a distinct revelation made to him that his house should endure through his sons, and in the person of Jesus Christ, who should come out of his loins; even as was foretold by the mouth of the prophet Nathan: "And when thy days shall be fulfilled, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be estab-

lished forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever." It is believed that David uttered this praise when God had uttered these promises to him of the blessings that should come to his seed in the person of the Messiah. Why, he simply believed what God said, and there came into his heart strength, because he could lay grip on something, and was supported by it, and so was strong. But we are constantly mistaking faith for a kind of ecstasy. Faith is not feeling; it is assent of the intellect to what God has said. When you believe precisely as David believed, you will be strong. Why should not David feel strong when God had promised? We are apt, when something difficult comes, to gird ourselves up and say: "Now, I must be strong"; but we find it desperately hard work, and finally perhaps strength fails and we are overcome. Just when our own strength fails, we can resist if we can get something on which to lean. We have something on which to lean: it is God's word. You need not be lifted into some abnormal experience, in order to have faith, although such an experience may come, as the result of faith.

David believes, and, believing, has strength to meet all the doubt and all the wonder and all the mists and all the future history of himself and of all his house. Now, this is faith, and this is the way to be strong. There is something you can lean on; it is what God declares to you in his word. The reason why we are Christians of so little faith is because we know so little of what God has for us. God's book is full of the sweetest, richest promises for them, yet they do not know it. Dear friends, we cannot be Christians of strong soul if we do not have more knowledge of God's word. Believe that the Scriptures are written for us, and take hold of them by faith. When you are troubled, instead of looking into the faces of your troubles, you should just adopt God's way, the way of faith; should turn over the Scriptures, and read such passages as this: "All things shall work together for good to them that love God," and believe it.

I stood a thousand feet above the level of the sea in the Yellowstone National Park. The great mountains and the geysers and the prairies and the sweet lake and the river were all within

the horizon of my vision. And so you and I can never get into such trouble that we shall be out of the horizon of God's love. All things shall work together for good. You need not doubt whether God means blessing to you in this or that grim experience. Now, suppose that, instead of nerving yourself to meet some trouble, you should determine to believe the promise and keep hold of it. That is the way to get strong, for faith is a grip on God's promise. I wish I could get that miserable notion out of my own head and out of yours, that faith is a sort of ecstasy.

Another way to get this inward strength is to use a promise as an argument in prayer. When you use a promise as an argument, and when you really pray a promise, then you increase your grip, and that increase of grip reacts upon you, and you feel stronger and stronger inwardly. David used this promise in his prayer: "For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee a house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. And now,

O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: Therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue forever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it." Here God had promised this thing, and David now uses this promise as an argument.

I may have mentioned it before, but it always used to impress me strongly. I have been with Mr. Spurgeon a great deal, and I have looked at him, and have said: "How can you be so easy? There is your orphanage, and there is your college, and there is your old women's home, and there is that tremendous congregation, and you have all to take care of." But he says: "What is the use of being bothered? I always pray about it." And I ask him: "Well, how do you pray?" And he answers: "I always get hold of a promise, and I pray about it, and so I get inward strength." The trouble with us is, we do not pray promises much; we pray inward desires. It is a tremendous power when you can say: "O Lord Jesus, thou hast promised this

thing, and this thing covers my desires." I remember some years ago I determined to pray about a particular thing from the promise, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." And so I got ever so much inward strength. The Lord loves to be held with the close grip of our faith, for he will never deny his word.

Then, also, we shall have inward strength in proportion as we use the strength we have. You have ever so much loose strength lying around that you have never used. There are ever so many people, for instance, who have gifts of real talent for the Lord; but they will not use them. If we only lived up to the strength we have, we should find we had far more than we supposed, and that strength would be immensely increased. And so, by using strength you will get strength.

Another way in which we can get strength in our souls is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Always the spring seems like a miracle. I go into the park and see the little nodules of buds here and there along the sprays, and not the suggestion of a leaf, all being closely folded in and

fastened by the glue; and if I cut one of the buds, I find there is a little moisture, but very slight. Yet, in the beautiful days ahead of us, that little bud will throw off its blanket of down, and unfurl more and more, until suddenly you shall find that the whole tree is in utmost leafage, and the glory of the spring and summer is upon them. But the little leaf does not have to do it of himself. From the sun comes the heat ray and the chemical ray and the light ray; and these rays start the bud and give it life. God is not ninety-two millions of miles away; God is better to us than the sun to the earth, because he is closer to us. The very God himself dwells in us if we will have it so; and dwelling in us, he will make us strong.

Years ago, somebody came to me, troubled about her fiery temper. She could not control it, though she had tried many resolutions, but would slip up now and then, till, in despair, she said, "O Lord Jesus, I cannot do it myself, but I consecrate this temper to thee. Come in and give me strength." And that prayer was answered. The Holy Spirit did enter and dwell

with her, and somehow or other as if, on a hot day in midsummer, the very coolness and freshness of some mountain ravine had come into her and calmed her, and she became soft and sweet of speech and absolutely triumphant, because the Lord had strengthened her in her soul, since she had opened her soul for the indwelling of his Holy Spirit.

Let us endeavor to believe what God has said; let us use his promises as arguments; then let us use the strength we have; and let us more than all and beyond all, open our hearts for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we shall be strengthened with strength in our souls.

Father, before thy footstool kneeling,
Once more my heart goes up to thee:
For aid, for strength, to thee appealing,
Thou who alone can'st succor me.

Hear me! for heart and flesh are failing,
My spirit yielding in the strife;
And anguish, wild as unavailing,
Sweeps in a flood across my life.

Help me to stem the tide of sorrow.
Help me to bear thy chastening rod;
Give me endurance, let me borrow
Strength from thy promise, O my God!

Not mine the grief which words may lighten;
Not mine the tears of common woe;
The pang with which my heart strings tighten
Only the All-seeing One may know.

And I am weak; my feeble spirit
Shrinks from life's task in wild dismay;
Yet not that thou that task wouldst spare it,
My Father, do I dare to pray.

Into my soul thy might infusing,
Strengthening my spirit by thine own;
Help me—all other aid refusing—
To cling to thee and thee alone.

And oh! in my exceeding weakness,
Make thy strength perfect: thou art strong
Aid me to do thy will with meekness,
Thou to whom all my powers belong.

Saviour! our human form once wearing,
Help, by the memory of that day,
When painfully thy dark cross bearing,
E'en for a time thy strength gave way.

Beneath a lighter burden sinking,
Jesus, I cast myself on thee;
Forgive, forgive, this useless shrinking
From trials that I know must be.

Oh! let me feel that thou art near me;
Close to thy side, I shall not fear.
Hear me, O Strength of Israel! hear me;
Sustain and aid! in mercy, hear!

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Wayland, Hoyt. D.D.
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